



COVID-19: FAQ for Residential and Commercial Buildings

This document provides answers for residential and commercial building owners and managers to frequently asked questions about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

COVID-19

For general information on COVID-19, including how to guard against stigma, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

Are there specific safety measures building owners and managers should follow?

- Make sure that common areas are frequently cleaned and disinfected to help slow person-to-person spread of COVID-19.
 - Pay particular attention to cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, stairway railings, elevator buttons, reception desks, push plates and laundry room equipment.
 - For more information about how to clean and disinfect surfaces, and other preventive measures, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "General Cleaning/Disinfection Guidance for Non-Health Care Settings."

- Building staff and others entering and leaving should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after cleaning. Hands can be washed with warm or cold water. They should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
 - Building staff should make sure that all handwashing sinks in the common areas have clean running water, soap and paper towels at all times.
 - Consider having alcohol-based hand sanitizers in common areas (for example, lobby, bathrooms, laundry rooms) to encourage hand hygiene among building occupants.
 - Put up posters about handwashing in bathrooms and other common areas as appropriate. Visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "Wash Your Hands Poster for Adults," available in multiple languages.

- Everyone in the building should practice physical distancing, keeping 6 feet between themselves and others, whenever possible.
 - Limit the number of people getting into the elevator at the same time to avoid crowding. People should consider only riding the elevator with their own party, taking the stairs, or waiting for the next elevator.

- Consider posting in common areas the "Stop the Spread of Coronavirus" flyer, which is available in multiple languages at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus.

If the building has common areas, should these areas be closed?

- Building owners and property managers should consider closing or limiting access to common areas, such as game rooms, playrooms and lounges. If these remain open, they should be cleaned and disinfected frequently, and access should be limited so that occupants can maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between each other.

Can the COVID-19 virus spread through pools and hot tubs?

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools and hot tubs. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (such as with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19. However, while there is ongoing community spread of COVID-19, residents should practice healthy hand hygiene and avoid close contacts (social or physical distancing). Building owners and operators should conduct routine cleaning of surfaces using appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods, paying special attention to frequently touched surfaces and objects (see “General Cleaning/Disinfection Guidance for Non-Health Care Settings” at [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) for recommendations).

Should building staff wear masks?

- In general, staff should wear a face covering when they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your mouth and nose. It is essential that staff continue to practice physical distancing and healthy hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and look for “FAQ About Face Coverings.”
- If they need to be outside or interact with building occupants, they should practice healthy hand hygiene and stay at least 6 feet from others when possible — distance is our best defense.
- Do not hoard face masks. Our health care providers need face masks to stay healthy and to care for the most critically ill. Health care workers cannot keep distance from others, avoid sick people, or avoid contact with others’ bodily fluid, such as saliva. Health care workers are the ones who need masks.

What if there are no building staff reporting to work?

- Consider identifying backup staff or asking for building occupant volunteers to help with package delivery, routine cleaning and disinfecting, and other tasks in the building as appropriate, while maintaining physical distancing at all times.

Will the City notify building owners or occupants if someone in the building is sick or tests positive for COVID-19?

- No. The NYC Health Department will not notify building owners or occupants of reports of sickness or cases.

Should property managers or residents notify the City or others in a building if a person in the building is sick or has COVID-19?

- No. Property managers and building occupants do not need to notify the City or others in a building if someone in the building is sick. With widespread community transmission, many people will get sick and recover at home. All New Yorkers should follow health guidance and stay home. If symptoms do not go away or get worse after three to four days, consult with a doctor.
- If an ill building occupant needs emergency assistance, call **911**.

Should building deliveries (for example, packages, food deliveries) be handled differently?

- Building occupants should maintain physical 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 delivery services (for example, Uber Eats, FreshDirect, Amazon) 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.

Should temperature or humidity in buildings be adjusted to prevent the transmission of COVID-19?

- The NYC Health Department does not recommend that buildings increase humidity levels to control COVID-19 transmission. Adjusting the temperature or humidity of a building is not likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Are there any special ventilation precautions for COVID-19?

- No special ventilation precautions are recommended for residential or commercial buildings. Building staff should make sure building ventilation systems are working properly and maintained per standard protocols for optimal indoor air quality. If feasible, enhance ventilation in common areas and increase the amount of outdoor air that is coming into the building.

What should occupants do if there is a fire alarm in the building?

- Building occupants should follow the building’s standard protocols if there is a fire alarm, and fire safety should not be compromised. Fire and building codes should continue to be followed, and fire doors should not be propped open. Encourage building occupants to practice physical distancing and maintain at least 6 feet distance from each other as they exit the building during such an incident.

What if repairs are needed in a specific unit (for example, plumbing, maintenance)?

- Building occupants and workers should follow normal preventive actions, such as practicing healthy hand hygiene and maintaining physical distancing while the work is being done. Building occupants and workers should also consider wearing face coverings (see “FAQ About Face Coverings” at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus). Clean and disinfect

work areas afterwards (see “General Cleaning/Disinfection Guidance for Non-Health Care Settings” at [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) under “Businesses and Other Facilities”).

Should building owners proceed with eviction processes during this time?

- No. New York State issued a moratorium on evictions until further notice. Visit [governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/EO_202.8.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/EO_202.8.pdf) to read the executive order.

What should a building owner or operator do if they are closing the building?

- Building owners and operators considering partial or complete closures should take steps to make sure buildings are functional and meet occupancy standards when ready to reopen (for example, maintain building HVAC and mechanical systems to control relative humidity and prevent mold growth; take measures to assess and ensure building water systems are safe post reoccupancy).

How else can residential building owners and property managers help residents stay healthy and less lonely during this time?

- If possible and if residents want to be contacted, check in with residents by phone or text, not in person. Consider using bulletin boards, email or other digital communication platforms to share information with occupants.
- Separate facts from fear and guard against stigma. The outbreak is absolutely no excuse to spread racism and discrimination. If someone in the building is being harassed due to their race, nation of origin or other identities, they can report discrimination or harassment to the NYC Commission on Human Rights by calling **311**. They can also file a complaint online by visiting [nyc.gov/cchr](https://www.nyc.gov/cchr).

For more information and support:

- If you need a doctor, NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. Call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.
- If you are feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed, connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, the City’s confidential helpline. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online by visiting [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://www.nyc.gov/nycwell). You can also call the New York State COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314 from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week. The phone line is staffed with specially trained volunteer professionals who are there to listen, support and refer if needed.
- For more information about businesses and other non-health care settings, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and look for "Business and Non-Health Care Settings Guidance" under the "Businesses and Other Facilities" section.