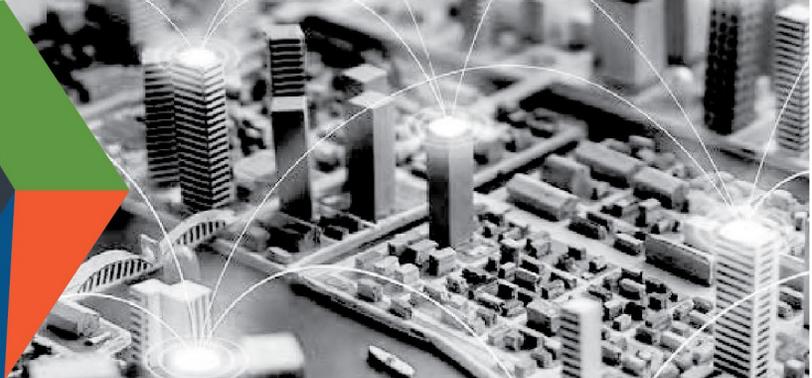




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# GUIDELINES FOR 911 CENTERS: CLEANING AND DISINFECTING DURING A PANDEMIC

These recommendations are advisory and are not to be considered Federal directives or standards. Individual centers should review and apply the guidance based on their own requirements and discretion. All actions should appropriately balance public safety, the health and safety of the workforce, and the continued delivery of essential services and functions.

Maintaining operational and resilient 911 centers—to include emergency communication centers (ECC), public safety answering points (PSAP), public safety communication centers (PSCC), emergency operations centers (EOC), and other public safety command centers—is imperative during pandemic response for both public health and safety, as well as community well-being. A pandemic, such as coronavirus (COVID-19), presents a real and immediate threat to the ability of these critical centers to continue operations effectively. In response, CISA has developed a series of recommendations for all levels of government to use when addressing a pandemic and its potential impact on 911 centers.

For the most current guidance on disease control and prevention, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Be sure to look for the most specific and up to date guidance for current circumstances and role. For example, for the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), consult [Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services \(EMS\) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points \(PSAPs\) for COVID-19 in the United States](#).

The following guidance is intended to support public safety partners across all levels of government when developing their policies and procedures regarding cleaning and disinfecting 911 centers.

## DEFINITIONS



**Cleaning:** The removal of dirt and impurities, including germs, from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs. By removing the germs, cleaning decreases their number and therefore the risk of spreading infection.<sup>1</sup>



**Disinfecting:** Using chemicals, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)-registered disinfectants, to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs. However, killing germs remaining on a surface after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection.<sup>2</sup>

## RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

- Clean and disinfect all work surfaces, especially “high touch” and “high traffic” areas, that personnel may encounter, including all shared equipment.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions regarding exact concentration, application method, contact time, and surface use (i.e. particular surfaces require specific solutions [e.g., tablets]).
- Use products designated by the EPA as effective against the virus. For example, EPA provides specific guidance on [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [“Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities,”](#) last modified April 1, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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- For hard (non-porous) surfaces, a diluted bleach solution (1/3 cup of non-expired bleach per gallon of water), can be used, ensuring a contact time of at least one minute. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner. For additional disinfecting best practices, see the CDC's guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).
- Ultraviolet light (UV) sanitizers work best on smooth surfaces and may be used to supplement cleaning and disinfecting. They should be relied upon for disinfection only as advised by EPA or State and local guidelines. Also, some heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can be equipped with UV equipment to sanitize the treated air in a call center.
- Ensure that an adequate supply of disinfectants and other cleaning products are available at all times. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, disinfectants, and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces and surrounding areas. Ensure that hand soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol, and other hand cleaning products are also available to workers.
- If an external cleaning organization is employed, ensure the organization has the proper credentials, access, and oversight, and follows current guidelines and infectious disease cleaning best practices, including any medical screening procedures prior to entering the facility.

## High-Touch Surfaces to Disinfect

- Keyboards and computer accessories (e.g., mouse)
- Telephones – buttons, handsets, and cords
- Work tools
- Equipment
- Monitors and touchscreens
- Power buttons and adjustment controls
- Adjustable lighting arms
- Chair arms and chair adjustment levers
- Keyboard drawers
- Card key/access controls
- Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card readers
- Headsets, console headset connector(s)
- Boom, speakers and desk microphones
- Console radio/telephone recording/playback devices
- Personal beverage and food containers
- Common surface areas
- Doorknobs/handles
- Elevator buttons
- Light switches
- Toilets
- Faucets
- Sinks



## How to Disinfect

### Procedures

- Begin by removing dirt using all-purpose cleaner and then apply a disinfectant to remove pathogens. Consult manufacturer's instructions on proper use of cleaning products. Do not apply liquids directly on information technology equipment; spray a towel and then wipe the equipment to prevent pushing liquids inside the equipment.
- Use disposable (i.e. paper) towels instead of fabric towels; use soft, absorbent, lint-free cloths for drying, if required.
- Follow standard operating procedures for disposal of cleaning waste. Cleaning waste should never be stored in the facility and should be immediately removed to a proper receptacle.

### Protections while Cleaning

- Disposable gloves and gowns should be worn. Advise personnel to use personal protective equipment (PPE) mindfully and follow the CDC's [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE and Equipment](#).
- A face shield, facemask, and/or goggles should be worn if splashes or sprays are anticipated.
- Disposable gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid additional transfer contamination.
- Employees should wash their hands after removing gloves. Washing hands should involve the use of soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Any tears or other failures of PPE should be immediately reported and/or rectified.
- Use care when applying cleaning chemicals; be prepared to move staff with respiratory ailments away from work areas being cleaned and do not allow them to return until fumes have been removed by ventilation or evaporation.

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## Material – Electronics (e.g., tablets, touchscreens, keyboards, radios)

- Consult manufacturer’s recommendations for cleaning equipment to avoid damage or warranty violations.
- If necessary, and if the disconnection will not present or cause a failure of the equipment or the system, disconnect equipment prior to cleaning. Some equipment may need to cool before cleaning. Do NOT spray liquids into or on electronic equipment to clean or disinfect and do not submerge any electronic equipment; apply cleaners and disinfectants to paper towels (do not saturate). Use the paper towel to clean and a soft, absorbent, lint-free cloth for drying, if required, after necessary contact time for disinfection.
- Consider use of wipeable covers. Use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70 percent alcohol for disinfection.

## Material – Clothing and other items that can be laundered

- Avoid shaking clothing or linen. Clothing and linen should be washed at the warmest appropriate water setting and dried completely. Clean and disinfect any hampers or collection points for clothing.
- After a shift, remove and bag all duty clothing and change into clean street clothes. Take bagged clothing home (unless washing facilities are provided onsite due to local procedures) and deposit the clothing directly into a washing machine. Street clothes should also be removed and added to the washer. Take a shower to remove any contaminants on hair or body. Add detergent and start washer after showering.

## Frequency

- Clean and disinfect surfaces as soon as possible after a known exposure.
- Clean “high-touch” surfaces, console positions, and call-taking workspaces and equipment before each shift or every different person’s usage. Conduct spot checks.
- Increase cleaning frequency as needed. Some 911 centers clean continuously during a pandemic, while disinfecting every few hours. Janitorial positions should be staffed around the clock for periodic cleaning of the center and a thorough cleaning should happen at least once every 24 hours.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 911 centers may also consider acquiring additional cleaning resources (e.g., washer/dryer in case the center must resort to reusable towels or for clothes if staff must shelter in place, use of professional sanitizing company).
- Train all staff who may be involved in cleaning; this should include the hazards of cleaning chemicals in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s [Hazard Communication Standard](#). Appropriate training should also be provided to all staff for the proper donning, use, and removal of PPE to ensure maximum efficacy and maximum reduction of contamination.
- 911 centers should work with State, local, Tribal, and territorial health departments to ensure that appropriate local protocols and guidelines regarding cleaning and disinfecting are followed.

## OTHER PANDEMIC RESOURCES

Recognizing the critical importance of the health and performance of 911 centers during a pandemic, CISA has developed a suite of documents to provide other specific guidance in addition to cleaning and disinfecting:

- [Guidelines for Executives: 911 Center Pandemic Recommendations](#)—Emphasizes the importance of communications centers, highlights the unique risk of a pandemic to resiliency of 911 operations, communicates the need for executive level action, and provides a brief description of available guidance for 911 administrators.
- [Guidelines for 911 Centers: Pandemic Planning](#)—Serves to highlight governance, resource planning, and contingency considerations from a holistic perspective during a pandemic.
- [Guidelines for 911 Centers: Pandemic Operating Procedures](#)—Provides recommendations on how to organize, train, and care for personnel while operating through a pandemic. It also offers considerations for pandemic-specific planning and procedures.

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