



## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYERS: INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

A Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) was declared for the COVID-19 outbreak due to the novel coronavirus, now named SARS-CoV2, on 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO) Director General (DG), based on the number of persons affected. The virus has been detected worldwide and on the 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

Jamaica confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on March 10, 2020. The Government of Jamaica has mounted an intense prevention and control programme for the outbreak. Prevention and containment are key strategies to minimize the impact on Jamaica's labour force.

Transmission of the COVID-19 virus has been linked to **close contact** between individuals within closed settings, such as households, health facilities, assisted living and residential institution environments.

However, community settings have been found vulnerable to COVID-19 transmission events including publicly accessible buildings, faith-based community centres, markets, transportation and business settings. Therefore, operators and owners should incorporate environmental cleaning as part of their routine activities in preventing transmission.

### **Scope of the Document**

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) has updated the recommendations for infection prevention and control to reflect new scientific evidence on the transmission of SARS-CoV2 and is providing the following information to guide employers in supporting this strategy in light of community spread of COVID-19 in the Jamaican population. It describes three (3) approaches to cleaning for workplaces, based on the extent of spread at this time and outlines environmental health considerations and the implications for infection prevention and control. It also contains a Quick Guide - COVID-19 at the Workplace (Appendix II).



## METHOD OF TRANSMISSION

- **Droplets:** When an ill person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or exhales, they release droplets of infected fluid.
- **Surface contamination:**
  - Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables, or telephones.
  - Persons can also be infected with COVID-19 by **touching** contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Therefore, all sections of society, including hotels, businesses and employers, must play a role in halting the spread of this disease. Indoor settings and close contact environments enhance the risk of transmission. Comprehensive administrative controls should be in place to optimise:

- isolation of persons with respiratory symptoms
- performance of hand hygiene,
- mask etiquette procedures,
- maintenance of appropriate physical distancing measures including limiting close engagements to less than an hour and maximal use of natural ventilation, and application of appropriate routine environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures as outlined in Section 2 of this document.

## **SECTION ONE**

### **APPROACH TO CLEANING**

The SARCOV-2 virus is easily killed by using a number of cleaning agents available on the general market. Ensuring that agents such as soap and water, bleach (sodium hypochlorite) and alcohol are actively incorporated into the routine cleaning process helps to break the chain of transmission from fomites/ objects in the environment.

#### **1: *Routine cleaning***

- Cleaning involves the use of soap and water to remove dirt and grime. It removes microorganisms from surfaces.
- Cleaning should be undertaken daily as a part of regular operations
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection in public establishments should follow detailed standard operating procedures with a clear delineation of responsibilities (e.g. housekeeping), regarding the type of surfaces and frequency of cleaning.
- Particular attention should be paid to environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and items, such as light switches, door handles, tables, water/beverage pitchers, trays, elevator buttons and sinks, which should be performed frequently
- Adhere to scheduled processes for cleaning and follow approved local guidelines (MOHW)
- Employees and employers must be up to date in certifications for operation as is applicable.
- Health departments will continue to be engaged in routine monitoring and Public Health Certification as may be applicable.



### **High touch areas**

As COVID-19 cases increase, employers should look to meet the demand by increased cleaning and disinfection in all business places. The local health department will investigate each case of COVID-19 and based on these investigations, the necessary actions would be determined and are dependent on:

- size of the business operations
- interaction the employee had with co-workers and the general public

## **2: Periodic Cleaning**

- Periodic cleaning includes cleaning items immediately after use as well as cleaning surfaces on a regular basis throughout a single day
- Employers should utilize the MOHW environmental health considerations for cleaning, disinfection and infection control in their workplace protocol to guide cleaning
- The local health department can be contacted for guidance (Appendix III)
- Facility closure for periodic cleaning and disinfection is **not recommended**
- Business operators should empower all employees to undertake cleaning and disinfection especially in personal spaces of operation. Management should provide the necessary items to support this activity

## **3: Deep cleaning**

- Deep cleaning is done as an extra precautionary measure to destroy pathogens/infectious organisms that may be in the environment. It is generally done after prolonged closure of a building and/or after there is suspected or actual contamination of the environment with an infectious organism.
- Deep cleaning takes place when thorough cleaning and disinfection of the entire facility or a section is done on all surfaces and equipment, using a disinfectant solution that is 'stronger' than that used routinely. The person conducting this activity must strictly follow the guidelines and be attired in the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to assure protection of the individual from the possible ill effects of the chemicals being used. These individuals must be trained on the proper use of these PPE and cleaning and disinfection procedures as outlined in the MOHW's *Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection for Institutions including healthcare and residential facilities (July 2020)*
- Deep cleaning is to be observed and documented by the facility supervisor



- Engage all workers and encourage them to co-operate with cleaners by ensuring that surfaces are left clean and free of clutter so that deep cleaning can be done more effectively
- Facility closure for deep cleaning is **NOT recommended** as the first approach and should be undertaken under the guidance of the Health department through careful risk assessment

## **SECTION TWO**

# **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLEANING, DISINFECTION AND INFECTION CONTROL IN THE WORKPLACE**

## **Introduction**

These guidelines are intended primarily to guard against the risks to human health posed by contamination of the environment in workplaces as well as institutions such as educational, health care, penal, commercial, industrial, residential care and other related facilities in Jamaica.

## **Measures to be employed for safe operations**

1. Ensure all workspaces are clean and hygienic
  - Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly
2. Employ frequent disinfection process for all surfaces (doorknobs, computer keyboards telephones, counters, etc.)
3. Promote regular and thorough handwashing by employees, contractors and customers
  - Erect sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
  - Display posters promoting proper handwashing procedures.
  - Make sure that staff, contractors, and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with liquid soap and safe water.

## **Cleaning and disinfecting to prevent the spread of COVID-19**

An effective way in which businesses can protect workers and others from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is by implementing appropriate **cleaning** and **disinfecting** measures for the workplace. An assessment of the workplace should be done, and a cleaning and disinfection plan developed. This should include an outline of the cleaning and disinfection methodology as well as the cleaning schedule which should be in line with the MOHW Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines. (If this service is outsourced, this should be developed by the contractor/company and a copy of these documents should be kept in the establishment).

Consistent routine cleaning and disinfection should be done as well as additional measures in cases of contaminated spills and when a COVID-19 positive or suspected case enters the workplace.

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus.

**Cleaning** means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. Anything labelled as a detergent will work.

**Disinfecting** means using chemicals to kill germs (bacteria and viruses) on surfaces. It's important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs.

**Note: Disinfectants require sufficient contact time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for at least ten minutes before removing.**

### ***Routine cleaning and disinfection***

Strict and consistent adherence to routine cleaning and disinfection protocol of the Occupational Health and Safety Programme component for preventing transmission of communicable diseases, will mitigate against the likelihood of transmission of COVID-19 within the workspace.

1. Workspaces including surfaces should be cleaned at least once daily. Special attention should be given to frequently touched surfaces (e.g. tabletops, door handles, light switches, desks and hard back chairs and phones, toilets, sinks and taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles)
  - More frequent cleaning may be required in some circumstances. For example, if equipment is shared between workers, it should be cleaned between uses, where practicable
2. Once cleaned, surfaces should also be disinfected regularly
  - More frequent disinfection may be required at workplaces with a high volume of workers, customers or visitors that are likely to touch surfaces
3. Surfaces and fittings should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently when:
  - visibly soiled
  - used repeatedly by several people, high touch areas (e.g. trolleys, checkouts, POS machines), and

- after any spillage
4. Disinfection should be undertaken as part of routine cleaning depending on the likelihood of contaminated material being present at the workplace. For example, in a busy retail environment with many customers and others entering a workplace each day, more frequent disinfection is recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. By contrast, for a small work crew operating in the same part of a plant each day with little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning would be required once daily.

### ***Facility cleaning in the context of COVID-19***

Persons are exposed to COVID-19 everyday as part of being in the community and therefore, employers must make allowances for thorough cleaning and disinfection of all areas of possible contamination.

1. Clean and disinfect all areas (for example, offices, bathrooms, and common areas) that were used. Close off the affected area before cleaning and disinfection. Open outside doors and windows if possible, to increase air circulation and then commence cleaning and disinfection.
  - clean and disinfect hard surfaces using detergent and water followed by an application of an approved disinfectant agent such as 1,000 ppm bleach solution (2-step clean), for example, household bleach or hospital-grade bleach solutions that are readily available from retail stores. Bleach solutions should be made fresh daily as outlined in the MOHW guidelines.
    - If another type of disinfectant is to be used, the material safety data sheet must be available, and the approval of the health department should be sought.
  - Other surfaces can be disinfected with an approved disinfectant agent such as 70% alcohol, after cleaning is completed.
  - Cleaning staff for an area suspected of contamination need to be equipped with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This includes: masks, disposable gloves and safety eyewear or face shields to protect against chemical splashes.
    - If there is visible contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluids in the area, a waterproof apron should be worn.
  - Once cleaning and disinfection are complete, place disposable cloths, disposable PPE and covers in a plastic rubbish bag, place it inside





another rubbish bag (double-bagging) and dispose of the bag in the general waste.

2. **Facility closure is not a requirement for cleaning and disinfection to be undertaken.** However, the cleaning and disinfection must occur before any workers return to affected areas.
3. Whether there is the need to suspend operations in your workplace will depend on factors such as the size of the workplace, nature of work, number of people, and suspected areas of contamination in your workplace. This determination can be made in conjunction with the local health department.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), for indoor spaces, **routine application of disinfectants to environmental surfaces by spraying or fogging (also known as fumigation or misting) is not recommended for COVID-19.**

## APPENDIX I

### Important notes regarding mops and wiping cloths

- These will become contaminated with micro-organisms from the environment and must be laundered daily and dried
- They must be available in adequate quantities
- There should be dedicated supplies for cleaning and disinfection of:
  - contact surfaces, following a suspected or confirmed case
  - sanitary facilities
  - food serving and preparation areas

### Care of cleaning equipment:

- Mop heads and cloths should be laundered, disinfected, and completely dried before re-use
- Buckets should be emptied and cleaned with a new batch of disinfectant and allowed to dry completely before re-use

### Disinfectant Solutions:

#### 1. *Hypochlorite 5.25 % (Sodium Hypochlorite, Bleach)*

Hypochlorite, the active ingredient found in household bleach is effective against COVID-19, Hepatitis B and C, HIV, other viruses, and bacteria, including some spores. However, it is inactivated by organic matter and solutions deteriorate rapidly. Solutions should be diluted from a concentrated solution each day.

**Concentrated hypochlorite is usually supplied in a 10% solution (10 000ppm av. Chl.) therefore a 1% solution is made by diluting 1-part concentrated solution in 9 parts water. Concentrated solutions of hypochlorite are corrosive and damage both metals and fabrics, thus, some surfaces can be disinfected with 70% alcohol.**

**Additional information regarding the dilution is contained in the MOHW Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines.**

#### 2. *Alcohol(s)*

Ethyl Alcohol (70%) and Isopropyl Alcohol 70% are rapid acting surface disinfectants that are effective against bacteria and most viruses.

## APPENDIX II

### Quick Reference Guide – Dealing with COVID-19 at the Workplace

As an employer you are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose people however, the goal is to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace as far as possible.

Employers can use the following scenarios to guide the process:

#### SCENARIO I: A symptomatic person currently at the workplace

1. ISOLATE	2. SEEK ADVICE	3. TRANSPORT
Prevent the spread. Isolate the person from others and provide a disposable surgical mask, if the individual is not wearing a mask.	Call the Local Health Department or the MOHW toll free line (888 ONE LOVE). Follow the advice of public health officials.	Ensure the person is transported to his/her home or to a healthcare facility.
4. CLEAN & DISINFECT	5. IDENTIFY & INFORM	6. REVIEW
Clean and disinfect the areas where the person has been immediately and close that area until cleaning and disinfection is complete. Use appropriate PPE when cleaning.	Inform the local health department (inclusive of possible close contacts). Follow the advice and instructions provided by the public health officials (Local Health Department).	Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether working arrangements may need to change. Consult with workers on Worker Health and Safety (WHS) issues.



## SCENARIO II: A symptomatic person who recently visited the workplace

<b>1. SEEK ADVICE</b>	<b>2. IDENTIFY &amp; INFORM</b>
Call the Local Health Department or the MOHW toll free line (888 ONE LOVE). Follow the advice of public health officials.	Inform the local health department (inclusive of possible close contacts). Follow the advice and instructions provided by the public health officials (Local Health Department).
<b>3. CLEAN &amp; DISINFECT</b>	<b>4. REVIEW</b>
Routine cleaning and disinfection should be conducted daily, following MOHW guidelines.	Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether working arrangements may need to change. Consult with workers on Worker Health and Safety (WHS) issues.

### Remember:

- The parish health department will determine if there is the need for closure of the facility based on a risk assessment.
- The MOHW **does not currently** require any workplace/entity to automatically shut down its operations due to the presence of a person(s) suspected or confirmed with COVID-19.
- It is important to always follow the advice/instructions given by the local health officials.



### APPENDIX III

### CONTACT INFORMATION – PARISH HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Parish	Email	EOC Telephone 1	EOC Telephone 2	EOC Telephone 3
Clarendon	<a href="mailto:claredoneoc36@gmail.com">claredoneoc36@gmail.com</a>	876-986-9043		
St Elizabeth	<a href="mailto:stelizabethhoc20@gmail.com">stelizabethhoc20@gmail.com</a>	876-589-0811	876-965-2266	WhatsApp 876-828-1680
Manchester	<a href="mailto:srhamhd.eoc@srha.gov.jm">srhamhd.eoc@srha.gov.jm</a>	876-961-0128		
St Mary	<a href="mailto:eoc.stmary@nerha.gov.jm">eoc.stmary@nerha.gov.jm</a>	876-542-5621	876-587-9371	
St Ann	<a href="mailto:eoc.stann@nerha.gov.jm">eoc.stann@nerha.gov.jm</a>	876-542-5613	876-587-9374	
Portland	<a href="mailto:portlandeoc@gmail.com">portlandeoc@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:eoc.portland@nerha.gov.jm">eoc.portland@nerha.gov.jm</a>	876-587-9404	876-542-5623	
Westmoreland	<a href="mailto:wphseoc2020@gmail.com">wphseoc2020@gmail.com</a>	876-312-8572	876-918-0519	
Hanover	<a href="mailto:hanovereoc20@gmail.com">hanovereoc20@gmail.com</a>	876-956-9873		
St James	<a href="mailto:stjeoc@wrha.gov.jm">stjeoc@wrha.gov.jm</a>	876-952-2512	876-940-2617	
Trelawny	<a href="mailto:thseoc@gmail.com">thseoc@gmail.com</a>	876-312-8535	876-725-7337	
KSA	<a href="mailto:ksahdeoc@gmail.com">ksahdeoc@gmail.com</a>	876-926-1550-2 Ext 236	876-906-5496	
St Thomas	<a href="mailto:sthdeoc2020@gmail.com">sthdeoc2020@gmail.com</a>	876-549-2078	876-982-2304	876-982-1619 Ext 2214.
St Catherine	<a href="mailto:stchdeoc@gmail.com">stchdeoc@gmail.com</a>	876-548-1088	876-538-2780	876-538-3149



**References:**

1. *Ministry of Health Facilities Infection Control Policies and Procedures Manual 2000, Revised: 2014*
2. *Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID*  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>: *Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19*
3. *Safe work Australia: COVID-19 Information for Workspaces*
4. *Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection for Institutions including healthcare and residential facilities (Ministry of Health and Wellness, July 2020)*