



MUSEUM GUIDE FOR REOPENING

Connecting Pueblo Knowledge During a
Pandemic and Beyond

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide, compiled by the Poeh Cultural Center, with the support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, includes useful information about reopening in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Native American Museums and Cultural Centers. The guide also can serve as a set of proactive strategies to minimize dangers from potential pandemics in the future.

Poeh Cultural Center

Santa Fe, New Mexico



Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS GUIDE	2
OVERVIEW	3
WELLNESS	4
EMPLOYEES	5
PERSONNEL AND READINESS	6
COLLECTION HANDLING READINESS STRATEGIES	8
EMPLOYEE WELLNESS.....	9
PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND FACE COVERINGS.....	10
COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC.....	11
VISITOR GUIDELINES:	12
EXHIBITIONS:	13
CLEANING PROCEDURES	17
VENTILATION AND OTHER BUILDING SYSTEM UTILITIES.....	20
APPENDIX ONLINE ACCESS RESOURCES.....	23

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS GUIDE

The Poeh Cultural Center and the Pueblo of Pojoaque wishes to thank the Institute of Museum and Library Services for its financial support in conducting the outreach and in developing this guide titled *Connecting Pueblo Knowledge During a Pandemic and Beyond*, particularly for Native American Museums and Cultural Centers. In addition, thanks are given to the Emergency Operations Center at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, whose guidance and proactive measures when the pandemic first hit, added critical insights to consider as the guide was being developed.

While the pandemic has subsided somewhat, there still is great risk of contagion from COVID-19 and its variants that has caused some museums and cultural centers to stay under lockdown to public visitation. For those institutions that are just now reopening to full visitation, the guidelines offered herein are based on recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and other organizations that worked to diminish the threats from COVID-19, and they could be considered seriously for any reopening plans. The guidelines are presented as checklists of items institutions can consider as they develop, implement and/or revise their pandemic emergency strategies to be active in the present and proactive in planning for the future.

For those institutions that have opened in limited to full capacity, the guide can be used to augment precautions that already have been taken, and just as importantly, can serve as a preemptive set of guidelines for COVID-19 and its variants, as well as for other virus borne contagious diseases that could occur in the future.

We are more than willing to share our insights and experiences as we reopened, and sometimes strategically shut down to the public in “phases”, and we are still learning new ideas about pre-emptive strategies to deal with epidemic diseases.

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OVERVIEW

Museums, cultural heritage and collecting institutions are dealing with emerging challenges created by COVID-19. This website and document offer practical guidance, particularly for small and medium-size Tribal museums to develop their reopening plans including: opening exhibitions, physical distancing, collection care and conservation concerns, enhanced cleaning procedures, employee wellness and training and communication to the public as we begin to invite visitors back into our spaces.

As museum administrators begin their reopening process, they should address these fundamental questions:

- What measures can be enacted to protect the health of employees, volunteers, and visitors, with consideration for the care and integrity of the diverse collection material types and environments?
- What distancing, pathway restrictions, and barrier limitations should be implemented?
- How can crowd management and planned group events be handled throughout the venue, including peak times?
- What precautions should be taken regarding high-touch interactive surfaces?
- What employee training and public communication is needed to keep everyone informed of the preventative steps being taken?

WELLNESS

What should an Employer do to protect themselves, their employees, and visitors?

- Employers should continually monitor international (World Health Organization - WHO), national (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC), federal (Occupational Safety and Health Administration - OSHA), and state and local public health guidelines for return-to-work restrictions and best practice recommendations.
- Employers should also consider developing a team or person to monitor, assess, and implement new COVID-19 transmission risk mitigation strategies as they become available and conduct employee training. Since museums constitute many industries under one roof, this guide; Back To Work Safely, for Construction, General Office Settings, Libraries, Warehouses (i.e., for Collection Storage areas), Retail Services, Restaurant Industry, and Childcare Centers may also be helpful.
- Employers should consult AIHA’s Resources List below to connect with other local museums and their professional organizations, such as the American [Alliance of Museums](#), for reopening plan examples and innovative practices.

A phased-in approach to reopening will allow museums to prioritize health and safety while taking progressive steps to restore regular operations. For a sample checklist, see “[Long-Term Closure Re-Entry Checklist for Cultural Institutions and Collection Care Stewards.](#)”

EMPLOYEES

All employees at every level of operation should be briefed and/or trained in pandemic safety precautions, with an eye to preventative measures for the future. Listed below are suggestions to consider as part of the process.

- Schedule live training for supervisors and team leaders before returning to the venue, possibly off- site or virtual, as a “train-the-trainer” opportunity and deploy those leaders once employees return to the venue. Explore the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences’ (NIEHS) Worker [Training Program for COVID-19 Virtual Safety Training Initiative](#). Detailed instructor notes are included.
- Provide pre-opening and/or orientation upon return training to employees and volunteers to ensure they understand and feel confident in managing the physical distancing and hygiene aspects of their roles, including reminding visitors of museum safety requirements. Provide clear direction on new, COVID-19-related protocols. They should understand when to stay away from the workplace, what action to take if they become unwell, and what symptoms to be concerned about.
- Educate employees on the cleaning of common high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, faucet handles, light switches, etc.) and unique venue specific high-touch surfaces (e.g., interactive touch screens, vending machines, shared equipment, etc.). Train employees to wipe down and disinfect surfaces after every work interaction and between timed-entry public visitations.
- Plan for respiratory protection training, medical surveillance and fit-testing for respiratory protection per OSHA [Standard 29CFR 1910.134](#) to be initiated before high-risk employees return in full force to the venue. Explore the distribution of medical surveillance forms electronically and e-learning access.
- Provide employees with information about chemical hazards, safety procedures, proper use and limitation of required PPE, face-covering usage, and personal hygiene following OSHA requirements. Employees must have access to Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all cleaning products and chemicals in use.

PERSONNEL AND READINESS

The sections below describe the procedures and organization can consider in policies related to personnel and readiness to handle challenges faced by employers and employees. Through Human Resource Departments, organizations should review and update the policies for sick leave and compensation. Policies should encourage and allow employees to stay home if sick, or if they need to care for dependents who are sick. Make sure policies do not inadvertently encourage employees to come to work when they are not feeling well.

- Consult OSHA’s Guidance on [Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) to assess which work activities and employees have very high, high, medium, and low-risk exposure levels. This will help determine how to phase-in employee and activity level to reach the goal of opening to the public. For instance: employees who can work from home, such as those in finance or design, should continue working from home; while employees who deal directly with collections and building operations such as janitorial, collections employees, and research scientists might be the first to return to work.
- For immediate openings, particularly while the museum is closed to visitors, allow telework-capable and high-risk employees (per CDC guidance: persons over 65 years of age or with certain underlying medical conditions) to work from home, and only essential employees on-site. Volunteers, docents, the public, research visitors, etc. are restricted.
- Encourage teleworking whenever possible; shorten onsite shift time and stagger work schedules, so on-site employees do not overlap. A good way of achieving this is by creating separate “teams” to rotate schedules.
- Minimize the frequency of jobs that require multiple people to perform close to each other and limit collection handling and movement to prevent the spread of infection. For example, reduce the frequency of gallery rotation.
- Offer alternative work hours for employees challenged by infrastructure not in place yet (i.e. daycare and school closures, eldercare needs, limited public transit).
- Before returning to work, communicate with employees via the facility’s webpage, web meetings with chat or Q&A sessions, or internal email system about plans that are in place, what employees should expect upon return, and online training materials (should they develop them).

- Establish a clear chain of command for return to work, especially on how/to whom to report unsafe conditions if supervisors are not on-site, who is the designated on-site safety officer, and if that person is expected to be on-site daily.
- Conduct only essential travel, with medical guidance, as allowed by local, state, federal, and international restrictions.
- Stock cleaners, disinfectants, and other supplies needed, including necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) such as disposable non-latex gloves, N95 respirators or face masks, and hand sanitizers.
- Install building signage, including distancing requirements, bathroom use requirements, traffic flow, pause points, face-covering expectations, food/beverage processes, easy access to hand cleaning, etc.
- Communicate expectations for non-employees. Consider adding contract addenda regarding vendor-required COVID-19 protocols.
- Perform walk-through and initial readiness assessment of all exhibitions, storage, and office spaces for any damage, lost or missing items, mold or pests, or emergency events that require immediate attention.
- Check the status of the facility's environment and consult with a conservator and facilities, especially if HVAC has been turned off for the duration of the closure.
- Emergency and disaster plans should be reviewed to comply with COVID-19 protocols.
- Based on collecting unit and departmental reopening needs, limit and then increase the on-site return of employees, access to research collections limited until later stages, special events, and the return of retail and food services.

COLLECTION HANDLING READINESS STRATEGIES

The procedures noted in the following sections describe the precautions museum collections, and other departments should consider as they relate to other institutions and the general public.

- Contact lenders, borrowers, insurers to inform them the institution is resuming normal operations and resolve any outstanding paperwork.
- Registrars should contact the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) to determine if shipping documentation and methods have changed due to COVID-19.
- Restrict or limit new loans and returns to items that do not require couriers. Consider “curbside” or loading dock pickups and deliveries.
- Make sure that lending and borrowing institutions can maintain the level of health and safety protocols required by your institution.
- Consider timed quarantine/isolation for new acquisitions, loans, and associated packing materials; circulating collections; exhibition rotations; and collections coming-off of public view depending on the latest public health information on surface viability limits. See Enhanced Cleaning Sections of this document for more information.
- Reinstall any objects that were removed from display locations before closures.
- Prioritize objects for exhibition that can be easily cleaned and maintained. Schedule longer-term exhibitions with objects that can remain on view for extended periods (i.e., not light sensitive) to reduce employee interactions and work in galleries.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

In the sections that follow are specific precautions employers and employees need to stay vigilant in, even after the immediate threat of COVID-19 seems to have diminished.

- ❑ Instruct employees and volunteers to stay home if they are sick, have a temperature of 100.4oF or above, or someone at home is sick.
- ❑ Employers should educate employees and volunteers to recognize the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and provide instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms. At a minimum, any worker should immediately notify their supervisor, their health care provider, and the local health department, who will provide guidance on what actions need to be taken.
- ❑ Consider establishing a daily wellness check upon arrival, such as temperature checks. Monitor the workforce through the day for indicative symptoms. If an employee receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), results should be reported to the employer. Employer HR Policies, HIPAA guidelines, and other regulations related to occupational medical records should be followed at all times.
- ❑ Send employees or volunteers home immediately if they report to have a fever of 100.4oF or above or are otherwise sick. They must stay home until cleared for physical return to the workplace by their medical provider, following the CDC's [Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID -19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#).
- ❑ Post signage to encourage visitors, employees and volunteers to distance themselves when coughing or sneezing and cover their mouth with a cloth or disposable tissue or the inside of their elbow, and wash or sanitize hands immediately after coughing or sneezing.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND FACE COVERINGS

The sections below describe the types of PPE that are available to minimize the risk of infection. There is a tendency for people to become lax once the perceived threat seems to have diminished, and being aware of the PPE listed below can assist in minimizing outbreaks in the workplace.

- Non-medical cloth face masks are NOT PPE, but they do offer some protection to others and should be worn while near other people in common spaces or shared workspaces. They are not a substitute for physical distancing, engineering controls, cleaning, proper hygiene, or staying home while sick.
- N95 filtering facepiece or a higher level of respiratory protection (half-mask air-purifying respirators for example) may be assigned to those employees performing high or medium risk tasks, especially in close proximity to other employees, such as housekeeping, facilities maintenance, cleaning and maintaining exhibitions spaces and artifact display plinths, conservation and collection care assessments. See the Training Section for OSHA requirements.
- Gloves are not a substitute for rigorous handwashing protocols. Gloves that are provided must be changed regularly, and employee should be trained in proper use and removal of gloves. See the [CDC's Sequence For Donning Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#).
- Any reusable cloth materials (e.g., face coverings, aprons, uniforms, cotton gloves, etc.) should be washed and dried on-site or bagged to be laundered at home prior to subsequent use. Laundering and drying should be performed at the highest temperature setting allowable for the fabric.
- Employees and volunteers need to be assured that they can let their supervisors know if they have concerns about the PPE that is being provided.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Every organization should have its COVID-19 policies and procedures clearly visible to museum personnel and visitors.

- Clearly explain using museum websites, social media, and email communications the safety and health precautions taken to protect visitors; amenities that are currently unavailable; and any restrictions or requirements for visitors. For example, see the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's (MFAH) [Welcome Back](#) webpage.

Notifications can include but are not limited to:

- Visitor requirements to bring and/or wear face-covering masks.
- Temperature checks before entry.
- Availability of restrooms.
- Physical distancing requirements.
- Locations of handwashing facilities.
- Occupancy limits per exhibit spaces, cafes, elevators, etc.
- The theater will be cleaned after each session.
- Advise that your facility will expect visitors to comply with all safety protocols and has the right to refuse entry or service if protocols are not followed to prevent risk to themselves or others.

VISITOR GUIDELINES:

Museums should consider that tribal museums and cultural centers have a very public face as centers for: displays, outdoor sculpture gardens, docent tours and lectures, performances and hands-on learning, student field trips, traveling exhibitions, and private events. The occupations that support the mission of museums include curation, conservation, art handling and preparation, scientific examination, education, exhibit design and fabrication, security, administration, maintenance, and more. Museums also collaborate locally and internationally to ship and receive loans and acquisitions (gifts as well as purchases) for temporary exhibits and ongoing research projects.

Therefore, these institutions will have to implement measures to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 by person-to-person spread through respiratory droplets and surface transmissions. Visitors can be reminded of their safety responsibilities through prominently posted signage, particularly in areas before they actually enter a facility so they can minimize the transmission of COVID-19. Signage can include reminders such as:

- Adhere to instructions regarding restricted access and movement throughout the institution.
- Do not touch collection objects or exhibition furniture such as vitrines, platforms, or stanchions.
- Evaluate your own and your family's health continuously. If either of you is sick, stay home. If either of you has an elevated temperature, stay home. If someone at home is sick or you came into contact with someone who became sick, stay home. If you have allergies or other medical illnesses, stay home.
- Before you go, check to see if visitors will be required to wear masks or if there are other special requirements for entry, such as temperature checks.
- Ensure you can comply with their physical distancing requirements and any limitations that may result from restrictions to exhibit spaces, cafes, elevators, or other amenities that may not be available to guests.
- Wear a face covering when out in public and maintain physical distancing (keep at least six feet of separation from others).
- Wash your hands throughout the day, and after touching your face or face covering.
- Inform the institution if you or a family member has been diagnosed with or has come in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 after visiting.

EXHIBITIONS:

Listed below are physical distance practices that institutions can adopt to control access to museum exhibitions in the general venue, exhibition spaces and galleries, collections storage and work areas, and meeting and group areas, in order to maintain safety to the general public as well as museum staff.

Physical Distancing: General Venue

- Reduce the number of people allowed into venues to adhere to local public health limits for the maximum number permitted to gather.
- Limit person-to-person contact, monitor the number of visitors, and restrict access to certain areas such as elevators (signs should state a maximum number of people per elevator per distancing guidelines) and galleries (especially small, enclosed spaces with less ventilation).
- Consider different hours of operation for vulnerable populations like the elderly or others who may be medically compromised by other illnesses or diseases.
- Creating one-way traffic flows, especially on stairs, and through special exhibitions or galleries, may be appropriate to mitigate crowding and prevent clustering of people.
- Add people-to-people distancing to gallery guard or attendant responsibilities.
- Consider cordoning off six-foot sections on benches or remove benches and replace them with distanced chairs if feasible.
- Control distancing for standing by identified areas demarcated on the floor or by temporary removable crowd control barriers both inside and outside the venue.
- Consider installing barriers like protective plexiglass panels that can help maintain distance between employees and visitors. Ropes with stanchions can help maintain distance between exhibits and visitors.
- Place signage and barriers to keep visitors from touching exhibit barriers, signs, information booths, vitrines, and other frequently touched surfaces.

- Suspend coat/bag check-in, with any bags carried in restricted to a maximum size.
- Security employees should not touch visitor belongings during bag inspection.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect wheelchairs between uses.
- Establish ordering and payment systems that discourage the use and handling of cash or checks (e.g., use an electronic pre-payment or app-based system where possible or have a service provider take payment information over the phone). If this is not possible, clearly indicate ticket purchase areas to ensure physical distancing.
- Encourage visitors to purchase all tickets and make reservations online.
- Consider using smartphone apps for food and drink orders. This can limit congestion around order areas.
- Consider physical barriers between employees and visitors for in-person transactions.
- To minimize contact between customers, consider using reservation-only methods for areas of the facility used by small groups.
- Limit access to theaters, cafés, high-traffic areas, and particularly tight spaces in the museum. Establish flow paths through your museum and identify points where traffic congestion may be problematic, especially by bathrooms and hand sanitization stations. Use signage to control the directional flow and stop signs to encourage waiting to pass or yield signs to indicate that they are entering high flow areas. Provide apps with alternative routes or other alternative venues.

Physical Distancing: Exhibition Spaces and Galleries

- Consider capacity restrictions to exhibits and viewing areas in addition to the entire venue. Physical distancing should be maintained even for smaller groups congregating at an exhibition, or smaller event within the space.
- If necessary, reduce the number of galleries open, particularly for dead-end areas, where airflow is limited or, more importantly, if the airflow in an area is poor and is supplied with unfiltered recirculated air.

- For exhibits that do not allow adequate distance of six feet between visitors, assess to determine if installations can be relocated elsewhere in the gallery or if acrylic sheet barriers can be installed.
- Cancel or limit the number of participants in group visits, guided tours, public programs, and special or private events until safe to offer them, as based on state and local health department guidelines. Consider holding events in outdoor areas as an alternative.
- Develop strategies to minimize contact with high- touch surfaces (interactive screens) and consider the removal of touchpoints that bring a person’s face close to the item (e.g., audio guides and head- phones) or “Please Touch” exhibits. Concentrate efforts on frequent and rigorous surface cleaning and disinfection protocols throughout the day and signage for the public to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after touching.
- For exhibits with no barriers, such as oversized sculptures (indoors and outdoors), historic gar- dens, and outdoor architectural monuments, develop strategies to minimize contact, including the use of barriers such as ropes and stanchions, strategically placed tapes or paint lines, and appropriate signage. If feasible, provide hand sanitizer stations and signs to encourage handwashing.

Physical Distancing: Collections Storage and Work Areas

- Limit access to storage and workrooms to essential personnel. Consider strategies for alerting others that rooms are occupied, such as signs or email alerts. Limit the number of visitors and seating in libraries and reading rooms to provide distance between visitors using collection materials.
- Restrict or limit access to books and archival collections, which generally require handling by the visitor as well as the use of artifacts requiring handling by employees. If digital substitutes are avail- able, these should be offered. Collection materials may be sequestered after use by visitors for the length of time appropriate for material and environment. See Enhanced Cleaning Section for more details.
- Consult Reopening Archives, Libraries, and [Museums \(REALM\)](#) for information on current research and toolkits to assist in workflows that provide protection for collections use.

Physical Distancing: Meeting and Group Areas

- Reduce capacity for areas that require seating or extended occupancies such as theaters, education spaces, meeting rooms, and employee and visitor transportation. Remove or block off seating, if possible.
- Keep live performances brief (e.g., to less than 15 minutes) or discontinued unless performing for a very small audience such as a private event.
- Hands-on demonstrations should be limited to docent handling only and should be discouraged unless safe cleaning and distancing protocols can be maintained to keep employees and visitors safe.
- Online education, lectures, taped performances, and gallery tours should be encouraged. In-person outdoor education and events can provide easier distancing, crowd control, and cleaning protocols.
- Ensure that the seating meets the occupancy limits and social gathering number limits required by local and state governments.
- Assigned seating should be used where appropriate (e.g., theatres, shows) such that guests are not seated next to one another, except, perhaps, for household groups.
- Stagger screen, show, and event times so that visitors for one event do not arrive at the same time as those for another and to allow for disinfecting and air circulation in theater space.
- Post clear direction signs to ensure that the entrance and exit (which preferably are separate from each other to accommodate one-way traffic flow) to/from the auditorium or meetings space are not areas of congregation or congestion. If there are exhibits in the exit area, turn off lights to these exhibits or provide barriers to prevent visitors from pausing to explore after the show.
- Ensure that public seating will be thoroughly cleaned before and after the conclusion of the performance or demonstration.

CLEANING PROCEDURES

Research has shown that regular scheduled cleaning and disinfecting of public and private areas reduces the chances of contagion considerably. The sections below note the general cleaning procedures, as well as procedures for cleaning collections areas.

Enhanced Cleaning Practices: General Venue

- Develop an enhanced schedule emphasizing cleaning, followed by disinfection, as based on the latest CDC recommendations. All contact surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly with a focus on frequently touched surfaces. Deeper cleaning and disinfecting protocols should be developed and implemented in cases where confirmed cases of COVID-19 are discovered. Refer to AIHA's [Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19](#).
- Select appropriate disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety and applicability for collection or exhibit surfaces (see next Section: Enhanced Cleaning Practices: Collections Areas). See the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS- CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and follow manufacturer specifications.
- If adequate cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces between each use cannot be accomplished, then the facility manager should consider leaving these areas closed, or additional resources for cleaning supplies and cleaning professionals should be allocated.
- The sharing of equipment and workspaces should be discouraged wherever possible. Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected before and after use.
- Use disposable cleaning products when possible.
- Consider implementing a checklist or audit system to validate when and how cleaning is conducted. Note that this may be a requirement in some states or local jurisdictions.
- Consider retrofitting or disabling (if the local board of health will allow) water fountains. Alternatively, replace with water bottle refill stations.

- Conduct inspection for presence of rodents, birds, or insect pests that may have infiltrated and nested during building closure. Coordinate any pesticide treatment first with collections employees or consult with a conservator to prevent adverse damage to collections.

Enhanced Cleaning Practices: Collections Areas

Before planning a room-by-room cleaning or disinfection protocol, FIRST check with your preservation/conservation employee or consultants about whether these treatments are needed for collection or exhibit containing areas. If a needs determination is made, ensure that these products have been vetted and are safe to use for all collection components. Many disinfectants and treatment technologies (e.g., Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation – UVGI) may be unsafe for use on collection items or historic surfaces.

- Conduct a risk assessment for exhibits made of materials that cannot be safely cleaned, such as historic surfaces, outdoor metal sculpture, or fragile stone, to determine if cleaning is necessary before making plans to enhance cleaning practices.
- Decontaminate collections and exhibition materials using timed quarantine/isolation. This is the best option, particularly for extensive collections or materials that cannot be cleaned or will be harmed by using common disinfectants. Consider if they can be quarantined after phased return to work begins.
- Facility management, safety personnel, or local public health authorities should be consulted. For current recommendations related to disinfection timing and methods based on materials and environment see, the Canadian Conservation Institute's (CCI) [Caring for Heritage Collections during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Northeast Document Conservation Center's \(NEDCC\) \[Disinfecting Books and Other Collections\]\(#\)](#) and Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) Project's [Literature Review](#).
- Cleaning or disinfecting beyond regular housekeeping is not required for collections and collections storage areas that have remained undisturbed during closure. These include: storage cabinets that remained closed over lengthy time; collections that have not been used or handled during the shutdown; storage spaces that were not occupied (or occupied by only one person for a brief time) during the closure; and items enclosed in vitrines, boxes or other containers.
- Before making plans to enhance cleaning practices, conduct a risk assessment for

collections workspaces, office, and work equipment (collections storage areas, collections work areas, libraries, conservation laboratories, etc.), based on the frequency of space occupancy and air exchange rates to determine what cleaning is necessary.

- Clean and disinfect all equipment and surfaces that are shared such as microscope oculars, table surfaces, camera equipment, etc. before and after use. Provide enough writing implements and tools so that these items are not shared.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces such as scanners, copiers, online catalog lookup stations, etc. frequently with appropriate disinfectants for electronics.
- Clean work surfaces used by visitors and chair arms and backs before allowing the next visitor to be seated. A disposable barrier, such as newsprint or blotter, can be used to protect a tabletop work surface if disinfecting the surfaces is not an option.

VENTILATION AND OTHER BUILDING SYSTEM UTILITIES

Since COVID-19 and its variants can be spread airborne, it is critical to consider the machinery and movement of air through an institution. Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and other building systems, such as cooling towers, chiller loops, and deionized water systems, are important aspects to consider when reopening a museum or similar facility because their function and use can impact worker health and effect environmental change for collections. Ideally, the HVAC system should have been adjusted to account for inactivity prior to closing the facility. If a museum or similar venue has remained dormant or inactive during the pandemic, this dormancy may lead to harmful and uncomfortable indoor air quality issues directly related to the HVAC system. Mold can grow on moist building surfaces due to leaks or condensation on windows, roofs, or pipes. In addition, if Legionella has propagated in stagnant water and plumbing, it could become aerosolized and spread throughout the workplace via the ventilation system and may cause potentially fatal Legionnaire's Disease. Therefore the precautions noted below are important for environmental safety for personnel and visitors.

- It is important that HVAC, other building mechanical systems, and the building itself be thoroughly inspected for any damage or issues caused by the vacancy Prior to employees reoccupying the workplace, employers and managers should consult facility management or HVAC / Building Systems professionals to ensure these systems are operating correctly and optimized to address indoor air quality and COVID-19 concerns.

- Facilities should verify the operation of mechanical systems and restore all sequences, set points, and schedules that were modified during the rollback of operations. Facilities personnel, conservators and collection care professionals specializing in HVAC systems play an important role in protecting building occupants by optimizing ventilation systems to help reduce the indoor spread of infectious aerosols through HVAC and local exhaust ventilation systems while maintaining environmental conditions suitable for preservation. Refer to AIHA [Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures](#) for information.
 - Ensure there is an adequate flow of fresh air to workspaces and optimize the ventilation system settings. Some ways to do this are:
 - Maximize fresh air through your ventilation system, as appropriate. Confer with collections care
 - staff and/or conservators on environmental needs in exhibit and collection storage areas.
 - Continued operation of all HVAC system.

- Encourage outdoor seating and open doors and windows if possible.
- Consider installing Minimum Efficiency Reporting Values - MERV 13 or MERV 14 air filters in ventilation systems where appropriate.
- Maintain relative humidity at 40-60%.
- Ensure restroom(s) is under negative pressure.
- Ensure preventative maintenance on ventilation and other building systems is completed periodically and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- If you don't know how to best utilize existing ventilation systems, ask an HVAC professional and see the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers' (ASHRAE) [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Preparedness Resource](#) updates for more information.
- Ensure water systems, such as portable systems, cooling tower, and chiller loops, and laboratory deionized or reverse osmosis water systems, are in readiness condition for occupancy. Some measures include:
 - Flushing water systems to remove stagnant water that could support microbial growth such as Legionella bacteria.
 - Confirming water quality parameters such as water temperature, pH, and pressure are correct.
 - Working with water treatment service provider to ensure system components are in good working order and chemical levels are within defined ranges for cooling towers, closed water systems, etc.

If you don't know how, ask a water system professional, and see the EPA's [Information on Maintaining or Re-storing Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use](#), and the Louisville Water Company [Flushing Lines Video/Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

Restrooms

Institutions should increase the frequency and efforts to keep bathrooms clean and adequately disinfected by considering the following:

- Post signage limiting restroom occupancy to allow for proper physical distancing and to remind employees and visitors to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Provide paper towels and air dryers in restrooms.
- The WHO and CDC currently state that hands can be dried using a paper towel or hand

dryer. Due to current uncertainties surrounding the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, care should be taken when using a hand dryer or paper towel.

- The use of touch or push hand dryers is discouraged due to possible surface contamination. If hand dryers are used, consider touchless devices.
- Businesses and employers should work with HVAC professionals to ensure that bathrooms are well ventilated.
- Minimize touchpoints entering and existing restrooms, if possible. Provide signage and materials (i.e., paper towels and self-closing trash cans) by the door if it cannot be opened without touching handles.
- Make hand sanitizer stations available throughout work and public places. Stations should also be placed in convenient locations, such as at entrances, exits, near elevators, and restrooms. Touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers should be installed where possible.

What should an Employee do to protect themselves, volunteers, and visitors?

- Evaluate your health continually. If you are sick, stay home. If you have a temperature, stay home. If someone at home is sick or you came into contact with someone who became sick, stay home. If you have allergies or other medical illness, stay home. Employer HR Policies, HIPAA guidelines, and other laws should always be followed.
- Wear a face covering (or specific respirator like an N95 if required by your employer) during the workday and maintain physical distancing per your employer's training and requirements.
- Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that may be provided to you and ensure that you are properly instructed on how to use it.
- Wash your hands when you arrive at work, throughout the day after various activities (e.g., after touching high-touch surfaces, after touching a computer someone else may have used, after handling garbage, after using the bathroom, etc.), after touching your face covering, when you leave work, and when you arrive home.
- Sanitize shared equipment and shared surfaces after use.

APPENDIX ONLINE ACCESS RESOURCES

Grant funding is available for implementing COVID-19 policies and procedures, as well as to procure necessary PPE for various tribal and non-tribal entities. Click this link to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), to access a searchable database for grants related to COVID-19 funds.

Listed below are links to additional online resources to consider for COVID-19 policies and procedures.

AIHA [Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19](#)

ASHRAE [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Preparedness Resources](#)

ASHRAE [Position Document on Infectious Aerosols](#)

CDC [About Cloth Face Coverings](#)

CDC [Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#)

CDC [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)

CDC [Resuming Business Toolkit](#)

CDC [Sequence For Donning Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)

EPA [Restoring Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use](#)

EPA [List of COVID-19 Disinfectants](#)

NIEHS [COVID-19 Worker Training Program](#)

National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) [Reducing Workplace Disinfectant Exposures](#)

OSHA [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

American Alliance of Museums (AAM) [Preparing to Reopen](#)

American Institute for Conservation (AIC) [Covid-19 Resources](#)

CCI [Caring for Heritage Collections during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) [Enhanced Cleaning Guidance for COVID-19](#)

MFAH [Welcome Back](#)

National Park Service (NPS) [Exhibitory to Combat Novel Coronavirus](#)

Northeast Document Conservation Center (NED-CC) [Disinfecting Books and Other Collections](#)

OCLC, IMLS, and Battelle [Reopening Archives Libraries and Museums](#)

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About Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

Occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, and controlling workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe. Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in their [Consultants Listing](#).

Additional resources can be accessed at AIHA's [Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center](#).