

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Multifamily Residences

As cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spread across Los Angeles County, apartment managers and management companies need to prepare for the potential impact to their communities and to address employee and resident concerns of potential exposure at their place of work and home. We need everyone's help in slowing the spread of COVID-19 within the county. The following guidance provides general considerations but may need to be tailored to individual apartment or multifamily residence structures.

General Information

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate sickness, like the common cold. Some viruses cause serious infections like pneumonia, such as SARS or MERS.

Common Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include some combination of the following: fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. This list of symptoms is not all inclusive.

Most individuals will have mild to moderate symptoms, but some individuals can develop severe symptoms such as severe difficulty breathing (inability to speak several words at a time or to walk a few steps), persistent chest pain, confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face, profound weakness or dehydration. People most vulnerable for these severe symptoms include those over the age of 65, and those with chronic illness or weakened immune systems

How coronaviruses are spread

Like other respiratory sicknesses, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

COVID-19 is new and we continue learning more each day about how it spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick.

Separate facts from fear and guard against stigma. The outbreak is 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, encourage them to report it. As part of The Anti-Hate Campaign, led by the Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) and the LA County Commission on Human Relations, 211 LA launched a countywide system for reporting acts of hate and bullying. 2-1-1 takes reports

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(by phone or online) of hate crimes, hate acts, and incidents of bullying that have occurred within Los Angeles County; regardless of whether or not a crime has been committed.

Call 2-1-1 or file a report online at <https://www.211la.org/public-health-and-safety/anti-hate>.

Employee and Resident Communication

- Accurate, timely and regular communications with employees and residents is critical. Make sure you have all available contact information for your staff, residents, and suppliers (cell, e-mail, etc.), and develop alternative ways to disseminate information (corporate web sites, app-based notifications, text messaging, etc.).
- The most common communications will concern prevention practices, changes in office policies (telecommuting policy or sick time) and resident communications. Certain resident policies will need to be adjusted, such as transitioning to an emergency-only maintenance policy.
- All apartment managers are encouraged to post resources in public areas to make residents and employees aware of the facts surrounding COVID-19 and ways they can help prevent its spread. Resources for sharing are available at no charge on the DPH website at <http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>.

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

- All employees, building occupants, and visitors are to practice physical distancing and use cloth face coverings while in shared common spaces and public areas of the complex if they will be in contact with others.
- Encourage vendors to educate and support their workers around social distancing, use of face coverings and other prevention strategies.
- During repairs done inside units both the resident and repair staff should wear face coverings while in the apartment together and try to maintain social distancing, even if both feel healthy. Ideally, the resident will also open all windows in the apartment while the repair staff is present to provide a high level of ventilation.
- Fitness areas, including basketball and tennis courts, community or recreational rooms, swimming pools and jacuzzis must be closed to all occupants, staff and the public per the Health Officer Order.
- Routinely clean public spaces and commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, elevator buttons, and laundry areas. Refer to the public health guidance on routine cleaning in group settings <http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protection/GuidanceCleaning-English.pdf>.
- Ensure that there are adequate supplies of cleaning and maintenance supplies.
- Find strategies to keep communal laundry rooms open while ensuring physical distancing. This may include creating sign-up sheets limiting the number of people using the facility at once or marking the machines to use and floorspace where people can stand to maintain at least 6 feet apart while doing laundry. Post signs reminding tenants to practice frequent handwashing and physical distancing.



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- Encourage residents who are not essential workers to utilize common spaces during mid-day hours to reduce traffic through those areas before 9:00 am or after 5:00.
- Urge residents to limit online purchases to needed items only to reduce traffic into mailrooms or in the lobby.
- Limit the number of occupants in the elevator to prevent close contact in an enclosed space. Advise tenants to stand near the four corners of the elevator and away from each other and to wear cloth face coverings when in the elevator.
- Encourage residents to call the management office or the front desk rather than coming in person, whenever possible. Maintain proper physical distance if residents need to speak with management or staff directly. Mark the proper distance away from the front desk staff to maintain physical distancing with tape or other signage. Consider installing a plexiglass barrier to protect staff.
- Encourage staff and residents to adhere to the personal prevention actions noted below.

Personal prevention actions include:

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 3 days (72 hours) after recovery, which means your fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications and there is improvement in your respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), AND at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared. Please refer to our home isolation guidance: <http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation> (also available in Spanish).
- If you are confirmed to be ill with COVID-19, or have respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath but have not been tested, tell all of your close contacts that they need to be in quarantine for 14 days after their last contact with you. Close contacts include all household members, any intimate contact, and all individuals who were within 6 feet of you for more than 10 minutes, starting 48 hours before your symptoms began until your isolation period ends. In addition, anyone who had contact with your body fluids and/or secretions (such as were coughed on/sneezed on, shared utensils or saliva or provided care to you without wearing protective equipment) needs to be in quarantine. Such people should be referred to our home quarantine instructions: <http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine> (also available in Spanish)
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wash your hands before meals, after using the restroom and after coughing and sneezing.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your elbow (not your hands).
- Do not touch your mouth, eyes, nose with unwashed hands
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Maintain the recommended minimum 6 feet separation from others when you are in public.
- Wear a cloth face covering when in public areas where you may encounter others, especially in indoor places such as the elevator.



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Rent Payment Flexibility

- Consider online-only leasing and prioritize online rent payment. Remind residents that there generally are no fees to pay by bank transfer.
- Where fees are involved, apartment managers are encouraged to limit or waive them.
- Work with residents who may fall behind on rental payments because of a loss of income. Create open lines of communications with residents to address financial, health, and other hardships that can make it difficult to cover expenses like housing.
- Consider implementing an eviction moratorium for the next few months unless the eviction is for criminal or negligent behavior that jeopardizes the life, health or safety of other residents.
- Work with your residents on alternative payment plans and agreements and be sure to put them in writing.
- Waive late fees and other administrative costs over the next few months.

Self-Quarantining/Self Isolating Residents

Apartment managers are likely to have residents who need to self-quarantine or isolate in their apartment. These residents may choose to self-identify and may ask for assistance to allow them to isolate.

Recommended practices in that situation include:

- **Service Requests and Apartment Access.** Suspend access to the apartment for routine maintenance, repairs, and inspections. The apartment should only be entered for emergency repairs.
- If an emergency repair is needed:
 - Advise the resident to open all windows in the apartment while the repair staff is there.
 - Instruct the resident to remain in a part of the apartment away from where the repair will take place and wear a face covering while the repair staff is in the apartment.
- **Package Deliveries.** Leave packages outside the apartment door to avoid close contact with the self-quarantining resident. Work out an arrangement for notifying people when packages arrive.
- **Garbage Disposal.** Schedule door-side garbage pick-up. Instruct the resident to leave garbage bags outside the front door of the unit.
- **Pet Care:** Since residents will not be allowed to leave their unit except to seek medical care, they may have to employ services such as dog walkers to care for their pets.
- **Vendor Services.** Vendors who regularly provide services within apartments should be notified that service is suspended to the apartment in question, without advising them of the reason for the suspension. If you offer door side trash pickup, that may continue.
- **Medical Visits.** If the resident needs to leave the unit for a necessary medical visit instruct them to use a face mask or face covering at all times while in the complex and parking lot and outside of their unit.
- **Contacts to the Case.** Residents who have (or are suspected of having) COVID-19 are required to notify their contacts of a potential exposure and inform them of the need to be in quarantine, this is

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not a responsibility of the apartment manager. But the apartment manager should take the precautions noted above to prevent staff and others from getting exposed.

- **Resident Wellness Checks:** Consider offering a phone check-in service for tenants who live alone to ensure their health and safety while under quarantine or isolation.
- **Protecting Resident and Employee Privacy.** Do not share information about the health and status of the self-quarantining/isolating resident or affected employee with other residents or employees, except as necessary to comply with other guidance received. There is also no reason to notify Public Health of any cases in your building, nor will Public Health notify the property or building manager/owner of any cases residing in the building.
 - Continued frequent cleaning of common areas will help to reassure other tenants if a resident chooses to share with others that they are in quarantine or are self-isolating.

Know where to get reliable information

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing.

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
 - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
 - Social media: @lapublichealth

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
 - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (Call center - 311 or (213) 473-3231 – Calls will then be routed to LADBS' Call Center. OR, use the MyLA311 Website at <https://myla311.lacity.org/> or submit via the MyLA311 mobile app.)
- CAL OSHA Guidance for preparing workplaces: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1, which is available 24 hours a day.