

Start the New Year by Spreading Prevention, Not Germs

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With the start of a new year, now is the time for facility managers to take preventative measures to help reduce the spread of office illness. There is no telling what illnesses and germs may compromise the health and hygiene of your office building and employees this year. For example, an estimated 60 million people in the U.S. fell ill from the H1N1 virus between April 2009 and January 2010.¹

For this reason, simple prevention steps—such as encouraging employees to get vaccinated against the flu virus and disinfecting frequently-touched office surfaces—can go a long way in helping to prevent the spread of illness.

Not only will prevention help to keep your employees healthier, but it will also help you save money. In fact, sick employees cost companies as much as US\$150 billion in lost productivity, higher health care expenses and increased absenteeism. Don't let absenteeism from illness cost your company this year.

In addition to following important spread prevention steps in your facilities, you should also offer flu prevention information and products to individuals who visit or work in your buildings.

The checklist below includes measures you can take to help you prevent the spread of illness in your facilities this year and for years to come.

✓ For facilities:

- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces. Illness-causing germs can live on telephones, light switches, doorknobs, keyboards and other commonly-touched surfaces. Make sure that disinfecting wipes are readily available in your facilities for these hard, nonporous surfaces—especially since illness-causing germs can live on common surfaces for several days and the majority of contagious illnesses are spread by touch.
- Follow cleaning protocols. Ensure that your professional cleaning staff knows the appropriate way to disinfect surfaces and have the correct cleaning supplies readily available.
- Follow public health information. In the event of a flu pandemic or widespread illness, pay attention to public health officers' instructions regarding closures, avoiding crowds or other social distancing measures.

- Know what you're up against. The website www.flu.gov houses a wealth of free flu information for individuals and businesses. The Centers for Disease Control offers an online toolkit at www.cdc.gov, and Clorox offers free prevention materials at www.CloroxProfessional.com.
- Call in sick. Have a policy in place to address sick-leave, especially during flu season. If you're sick, stay home. "Presenteeism," or attending work sick, can lead to multiple illnesses or even an outbreak. Encourage those who are sick to stay home and limit contact with others to help prevent the spread of germs.

✓ For people:

- Get your annual flu shot. The CDC recommends that everyone older than 6 months of age should get an annual flu vaccination. Getting a flu shot is an easy, low-cost way to prevent the flu and is the first step that should be taken to avoid infection. Visit www.flu.gov to find a vaccination location near you.
- Clean hands frequently. One of the best ways to help prevent the spread of germs

is by washing your hands frequently throughout the day. Hands should be washed in warm water with soap for a minimum of 20 seconds. When soap and water is not available, using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a good way to further protect against illness-causing germs—particularly after touching commonly used surfaces around the office.

- Cover your sneeze. Sneeze into a tissue or elbow. Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands, as germs can spread through touch.
- Practice healthy habits. Having good personal health lends itself to a stronger immune system. Get plenty of sleep, stay physically active, drink plenty of fluids and make sure to eat nutritious food. These steps make it easier for your body to resist infection and are an important part of maintaining positive personal health.
- Lastly, take time to recover. If you do contract the flu, take antiviral drugs

if prescribed by a doctor. Remember to rest, drink fluids and avoid contact with others to prevent passing the flu.

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1 *Obesity, Fitness and Wellness Week*, Oct. 24, 2009



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Clorox offers solutions to kill germs both on hands and on surfaces. The company provides prevention tools and tips to help offices fight the spread of illness causing germs. For more information, visit www.CloroxProfessional.com.

Did you know?

- Flu outbreaks result in more than 70 million missed days of work every year.
- Cold and flu viruses can survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours.
- Eighty percent of cold and flu viruses are spread by touch (including surfaces).

