

COVID-19 RELIGIOUS FACILITY & CHURCH REOPENING GUIDE

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As the country continues to face the COVID-19 pandemic and begins planning for the return to normal operations there are several considerations religious facilities need to account for prior to reopening or starting full services. This Religious Facility & Church Reopening Guide provides recommendations based on guidance and regulations from health organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970 and state health departments on preparing commercial facilities and businesses for the return to standard business operations.

While the CDC does provide guidance for COVID-19 in public spaces, another important source is OSHA which includes regulations for COVID-19 in the workplace under two clauses and standards.

First, under The General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970, 29 USC 654(a)(1), which requires employers to furnish to each worker “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.” Also, under OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) which applies to occupational exposure to human blood and other potentially infectious materials. Where respirators are required, employers will also have to comply with OSHA’s Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134). These standards provide clear requirements of companies to provide safe, healthy environments for their employees.

There are two primary aspects to providing the best chance of success in returning back to business in a safe and healthy manner.

These two aspects include:

1. Educate Individuals and on How to Safely Return to Service
2. Preparing a Healthy & Safe Work Environment



**Educate Individuals
on How to Safely
Return to Service**



**Preparing a Healthy
Work Environment**

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EDUCATE STAFF AND YOUR CONGREGATION ON HOW TO SAFELY RETURN TO SERVICE

Even though you may be opening your doors and holding services it is important to know that the risk of individuals contracting COVID-19 coronavirus is still present and needs to be addressed accordingly. As you begin your communication plan to individuals entering your facility make sure to educate them on the proper ways to safely return to worship.

Actively encourage sick employees and members of your congregation to stay home:

- Individuals who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should stay home to reduce the spread of infection. If your church offers online streaming or recorded services encourage anyone who is not feeling well to view the service using these options.
- Individuals should not attend service until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met

Reinforce the importance of personal hygiene procedures:

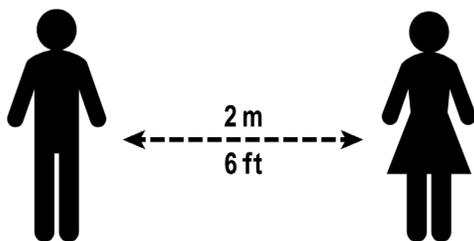
We have all learned the importance of washing our hands correctly and maintaining personal hygiene. These aspects are even more critical as individuals return to the public spaces such as churches and religious facilities. Educate your congregation and staff on the importance of continuing the standard hygiene precautions and ensure they have the necessary tools to do so. This may require installing handwash stations at entryways or refilling restroom soap dispensers more frequently.

Educate attendees and staff on any new procedures implemented:

As your congregation and staff begin returning to service, it may be necessary to implement new policies and procedures to prevent the spread of the virus. It will be important to educate all visiting individuals of the new policies and provide the necessary tools for adherence to the procedures. For individuals attending mass or otherwise visiting your facility it may be beneficial to post signs in high traffic areas.

Some recommendations to consider include:

- Temporarily abstaining from providing Eucharist / Holy Communion
- Ensuring social distancing rules can be followed allowing a minimum of 6' between worshippers
- Opening additional access points to the facility to limit traffic congestion



PREPARING A HEALTHY WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system.

This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increasing ventilation rates
- Increasing the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system

Disinfect the environment:

- Disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the facility, such as door handles and pews. It is recommended to temporarily remove any hymn books or Bibles shared among the congregation. Encourage churchgoers to bring their own Bible from home.
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
 - For disinfection, use EPA-registered household disinfectants. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available online.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

CDC Guidance on How to Clean and Disinfect

Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, EPA-registered disinfectants should be used.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method and contact time, etc.

Soft (Porous) Surfaces

- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely. Otherwise, use products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 and that are suitable for porous surfaces

When Cleaning

Wear disposable gloves and gowns (or disposable protective suits) for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.

- Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.

Gloves and gowns or protective suits should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increasing ventilation rates
- Increasing the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system

Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.

- Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick.
- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

FAQS:

When exactly can I reopen campus?

If you've been following the news, then you know that reopening anything is a very state-centric process. Some states are forming regional coalitions to share data and ideas that will help with reopening, but many others are making the decision on their own.

Stay-at-home orders for most states are set to expire throughout the end of April and early May. The most up-to-date information on your state's reopening status can be found with the governor's office and state health department websites.

A closed facility does not mean the virus is gone

Latest research at the time of this writing shows that the virus can stay active on non-organic surfaces for 7-9 days. Because of these findings, there is a common misconception that if a facility has been shut down, the virus will become inactive after around two weeks without human contact and campus can be reopened safely. This is a dangerous belief for several reasons.

First, leaving the virus to sit without a host will most likely deactivate it, but there are no guarantees. Not letting anyone in for weeks and then letting everyone come back in at once will create a welcoming environment for the virus to thrive. If an infected person comes in and nothing has been cleaned, risk level increases drastically.

Second, there are never guarantees that any facility has been completely shut down, especially on a large facility. Many properties that are closed to the public still actively have janitorial, maintenance, engineering or security staff walking in and out of buildings. The facility is also still receiving mail and deliveries, leading to contact with the outside. And even if you truly have shut down every operation at this time, you can never be 100% sure that a staff member didn't return to grab something from their desk that they forgot before lockdown.

Before a church or religious facility reopens, leadership must take active steps to ensure cleanliness, disinfection and a safe environment. A passive return without action can lead to a quick, second-wave outbreak.

REFERENCES

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1030>

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134>

ABOUT SERVICEMASTER DSI

ServiceMaster DSI (SMDSI) is a residential and commercial disaster restoration company that provides services through the ServiceMaster Restore® and ServiceMaster Recovery Management (SRM) brands.

Starting with its first ServiceMaster license in 1981, ServiceMaster DSI has grown to be the premier ownership group within the ServiceMaster network, amassing 85 licenses within the United States and serving as the flagship SRM operator. ServiceMaster DSI has 16 regional offices within the U.S. with its primary hubs located in the Chicago, Denver, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Miami, and Minneapolis markets.

Through these brands, SMDSI services clients in all 50 states and its large loss team has provided commercial disaster restoration services in more than 20 countries around the world. going into business with by asking the right questions and as always, take a long-term approach.

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