

September 14, 2020

Good afternoon, CAO Lessor Community.

Thank you for your continued patience and support as the Department of General Services (DGS), its customer the Department of Human Services (DHS), and the commonwealth at large continue to navigate plans to safely restore public-facing services to its citizen customers.

Since our last communication of July 2, the DGS and DHS have continued conversations and planning for the eventual public reopening of the state's County Assistance Offices (CAOs). Currently, DHS does not have any planned public reopening schedule for any CAOs statewide. We will continue to update our lessor community as any specific schedule is developed.

While we plan for the public reopening, our departments have also been continuing to review the current safety measures implemented to keep our employees and your building staff safe and healthy. To that end, you all have been supportive in ensuring continued daily CDC-guided enhanced cleaning (memorialized on displayed cleaning logs) as well as ensuring open lines of communication between you, DGS, and your DHS contacts on site. For this effort, we sincerely thank you!

In continuing to ensure we highlight any changes within the CDC or Department of Health (DOH) guidelines, we would like to draw your attention to guidance specific to building air ventilation and filtration. We have provided this guidance previously under the link labeled: [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease, May 2020](#). On this page, under the heading, "Maintain a Healthy Work Environment," there are several recommendations related to engineering controls using the building ventilation system which should be evaluated with the assistance of an HVAC professional based on the conditions present in your building. The guidelines are:

***Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:***

- *Increase ventilation rates.*
- *Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.*
- *Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas. With a lower occupancy level in the building, this increases the effective dilution ventilation per person.*
- *Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).*
- *Further open minimum outdoor air dampers (as high as 100%) to reduce or eliminate recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold or hot weather.*
- *Improve central air filtration to the **MERV-13 or the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.***
- *Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.*
- *Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.*

**Note:** Some of the above recommendations are based on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) [Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Review these ASHRAE guidelines for further information on ventilation recommendations.

As you review these recommendations, we want to emphasize the importance of reviewing this information with your HVAC professional to make the best decision on how to achieve the best results for your building and HVAC system in terms of temperature control and appropriate balances between ventilation and air filtration. We specifically draw your attention to the highlighted bullet and request you work to ensure the highest compatible MERV-rated filter for your system is running in each CAO location. Your HVAC professional can guide you in determining the best filter for your system. Highlighting this information was a specific request from DHS and continues to show the commonwealth's commitment to a safe workspace for both our employees and your building staff.

As we continue to collaborate around public reopening, if you have specific feedback or insight that may be beneficial to us, or if you are interested in engaging in discussions around what the "new normal" may look like for public facing services delivered through leased locations, please contact Beth Christian, Director for the DGS Bureau of Real Estate via email at [elchristia@pa.gov](mailto:elchristia@pa.gov) or at 717-712-8548. **We are specifically seeking feedback on your experience in supporting COVID-related tenant space modifications, such as cleaning and disinfection of plexiglass sneeze guards and waiting room area furniture and fixtures. To the extent you are assisting non-commonwealth tenants in specifically addressing COVID-related modifications, particularly plexiglass sneeze guards, we would appreciate your anecdotal feedback via email or phone by Friday, September 25.** As always, we value and appreciate your input and insight!

Thank you for your continued support. Below find hyperlinks to all previously provided guidance. As always, if you have questions, please contact Beth.

- [All Previous Commonwealth Lessor Communications](#) (and links to template building signage)
- [May 11, 2020 Lessor Communication, including FAQs and Resources](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease, May 2020](#)
- [Order Directing Building Safety Measures \(DOH, April 2, 2020\)](#)
- [Order Directing Public Health Safety Measures for Businesses Permitted to Maintain In-person Operations \(DOH, April 19, 2020\)](#)
- [PA Department of Health Website: Responding to COVID-19 in Pennsylvania](#)
- [PA Department of Environmental Protection Guidance for Dormant Building Water Flushing](#)

Thank you,



Beverly Hudson  
DGS Deputy Secretary for Administration