



How to Prevent and Manage Outbreaks in Commercial Environments? The Importance of Implementing a Strategy That Includes Awareness, Technology, and Proper Training.

Introduction:

COVID-19 has substantially impacted life all around the globe, ravaging through continents and shutting down economies. It has upended life as we know it and a return to normalcy is dependent upon carefulness and strict adherence to preventive protocols established by the CDC and local health care authorities. These protocols also include key industry insights for tackling the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

With commercial activities slowly coming back to life, it is important to either establish or cooperate with integrated outbreak prevention and management platforms. Adhering to these guidelines is both necessary and useful for all kinds of businesses including hotels, restaurants, schools, cruise lines, gyms and hospitals, to name a few. Similarly, businesses related directly or indirectly to healthcare should ensure provision of necessary general health care equipment. This requires global supply chain management on a national and international level.

Here, we will systematically run through some important steps that can help prevent and manage outbreaks in the commercial environment. These are based on improving awareness, employing technology and proper training.

1. Prevention

The most important aspect of the outbreak management strategy and technology is prevention itself. It must include a multi-faceted approach to minimise contact, droplet spread and proximity. Here are some of the essential steps that any commercial establishment should take:

- **Face coverings**

Using face masks and respirators is essential to minimise the spread of the virus. Wearing a face cover reduces the chances of SARS-CoV-2 (the causative agent of COVID-19) gaining access to the respiratory tract. Similarly, it also prevents the transfer of the virus from an infected person to the healthy ones.

- **Hand washing and sanitising**

The maintenance of personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, is essential to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (CDC, 2020). We continuously touch different surfaces and other people, which can be a potential reservoir of the infective agent. Hands must be frequently washed for at least 20 seconds and sanitisers must be present for all employees, guests or customers to use. All sanitisers must have a minimum 60% alcohol content (CDC, 2020).



- **Physical Distancing**
COVID-19 spread is expedited by close contact. All workplaces must ensure physical distancing between both the staff and the customers.
- **Ventilation**
A good ventilation system ensures easy and continuous passage of air through the rooms and the rest of the building. Only the establishments with good ventilation systems should be considered safe for working long hours. Otherwise, open spaces should be preferred.
- **Contactless front desk service**
At commercial establishments such as hotels, the first contact that a guest or a customer has is with the staff at the front desk. The service, at this point, should be kept as contactless as possible with no handshakes, masks on and physical distancing enforced.
- **Parking**
Valet parking should either be discontinued or minimised, as it can be a potential source of virus transfer and outbreak.
- **Electrostatic sprayers**
The restriction of COVID-19 spread requires the use of technological innovations. One such innovation is electrostatic sprayers. All entrances should preferably have these sprayers which disinfect the whole of the body (or car) surface passing through it.
- **COVID-19 Training**
All staff, from the top to the bottom, must undergo COVID-19 prevention training in order to inculcate all necessary protocols and ensure guideline adherence. This includes, but is not limited to, contactless training, physical distancing and hand hygiene. All the staff should be trained to use and handle disinfectants, dispenser and other COVID-19 related supplies. Guidance and training programs can be arranged for these purposes.
- **Shared Equipment Disinfection and Laundry**
Any equipment used by multiple people repeatedly such as in schools, gyms and restaurants should be thoroughly disinfected. Similarly, all laundry should be washed at the highest temperature setting possible and completely dried.
- **Hygiene Reminders and Signage**
It is good to have consistent reminders of preventive guidelines. Entrances, exits and high traffic areas should be used for this purpose.



2. Notification and Management

There are specific protocols for suspected and detected cases. Let's briefly discuss them.

Notification

Any symptoms of COVID-19, noticed in yourself or other people, should be immediately reported to the authorities.

Management

This includes the protocol of management of suspected and detected cases.

- **Isolation Protocol**

Any person with symptoms or a positive PCR test should be completely isolated in a closed room. Other people are to avoid contact with him and this protocol is to continue according to the CDC guidelines. Most symptomatic cases, however, are immediately referred to the hospital (WHO, 2020).

- **Room Recovery Protocol**

In the event of a suspected case, the inhabited room should be vacated and quarantined for, at least, 24 hours (CDC, 2020). After this period has passed, the room should be cleaned and disinfected. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other Covid-19 resources should be used. These supplies should be stocked for this purpose. In some cases, UV disinfection may also be used thoroughly clean the affected area.

Conclusion:

While COVID-19 has affected lives and crippled commercial activity worldwide, strict adherence to preventive guidelines by both people and businesses can provide the health care systems enough support to bring the lives back to normal as quickly as possible.

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