

Local 94 COVID-19 Mechanical Recommendations

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 94 (“Local 94”) continues its mission to protect the health and safety of its members, our families and the properties that we service and maintain. As frontline workers in this COVID-19 pandemic, we must use all of our diligence to maintain a safe working environment for all of the people at the buildings that we serve. Below is a selection of guidance from the leading industry authorities on heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration. All of them conclude that operating engineers can help make our buildings safer. Let’s do our part to help contain COVID-19 by making our workplace as safe as possible.

ASHRAE put together comprehensive guidance on the steps that Local 94 Engineers can take to address COVID-19 concerns. This article outlines the minimum ventilation rates and other measures intended to provide IAQ that is acceptable to human occupants to help minimize adverse health effects at the workplace. See <https://www.ashrae.org/about/news/2020/ashrae-resources-available-to-address-covid-19-concerns>.

The World Health Organization which has been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic also issued guidance on the necessary steps to prepare workplaces for the pandemic. The article also makes references to the importance of ventilation to help stem COVID-19 at the workplaces. See https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6

The Federation of European Ventilation and Air Conditioning released a report on March 17, 2020 outlining the critical role that operating engineers have toward the increasing the safety at work locations by increasing air supply and exhaust ventilation and increasing window airing which may help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace. See https://www.rehva.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/REHVA_covid_guidance_document_2020-03-17_final2.pdf. The Center for Disease Control has also noted the importance of air flow to help stem COVID-19 in the workplace.

Below are some of the best practices that we gathered from the various articles that can be used to help thwart this virus in our buildings:

- Dilute the air in a space with cleaner air from outdoors by increasing fresh air supply and exhaust ventilation to the outdoors
- Open windows in buildings with no mechanical ventilation
- Operational temperature and humidity set points generally will not affect virus. Virus only susceptible to very high temperatures and humidities.
- Make sure heat recovery systems have no leaks
- Contain contaminated air. Minimize return air, change filters (filters do not catch viruses, virus is too small)
- Constant air flow will move this virus through duct systems, and not collect on duct systems

- Although outdoor air filters will not catch the virus, and it will be able to get through, if any virus is able to settle on the filter, then the filter will be able to hold it. Always take precautions when changing outside air filters. Protect yourself with gloves and mask when changing any filters.
- Cleaning the air within the room. If using air cleaners, use close to breathing zone to be most effective.
- Make sure all surfaces are wiped clean and disinfected.

Our International Union put together a training session that you can access that will help to reinforce these best practices. See [<https://www.iuoe.org/members/covid-19>]. You will have to input your member username and password to access this training.

See other links

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html>

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/mers/control_prevention.html