

Keeping Employees Safe for the Reopening

An Update from General Services Regarding On-Site Safety & Cleaning Protocols at City Facilities

As you are likely aware, [City facilities will fully reopen to the public](#) on July 26, 2021. Some employees who have been working remotely will return to working onsite in order to support the staffing needs required for our public-facing services. *You can learn more about the City's reopening plans, including who will be returning to on-site work, by reading [this article](#) from the June 22, 2021 issue of City Week.*

If you are among the group of employees who will soon be returning to in-person work, we recognize that you may have questions about what the City is doing to keep employees and visitors safe during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Please refer to the FAQs below to learn what General Services has done over the last 15 months to prepare for a full-scale reopening of public-facing City facilities:

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

[How do I know that General Services has effectively prepared for employees returning to in-person work?](#)

Most City facilities have been staffed in-person, although not at pre-pandemic levels, throughout the entirety of the past 15 months.

During this time, General Services has worked diligently to ensure that staff who did not have the ability to work remotely, or who had to otherwise spend time in our buildings, were as safe as possible from exposure to the virus.

While our commitment to your health and safety has always been paramount, the pandemic drove our Facilities Operations and Custodial Services teams to reexamine our systems and practices like never before. For example, we are now applying guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) into our daily routines. As a result, our spaces and our air are cleaner than they've ever been – a new normal we intend to maintain long after the pandemic is over.

That said, we have found that our health and safety efforts (i.e. cleaning, HVAC updates, etc.) over the last 15 months have proven most effective when employees are

also following [Risk Management's office safety protocols](#) for mask use and other related guidance.

General Services will continue to do our part to keep our on-site staff safe and healthy. We simply ask that each of you commit to doing the same.

[Have you made any changes to our HVAC systems to improve circulation, filtration, etc.?](#)

During the early days of the pandemic, we reached out to many community partners and explored HVAC improvement options supported by industry experts.

As a result of this research, we first changed out the filters in our HVAC systems from MERV-8 to MERV-13 in addition to performing a thorough cleaning of the systems. Because the filters are now removing smaller particles, we are changing them more frequently and monitoring our systems for air flow. To help circulate more fresh air into our buildings, we also opened our outside air dampers.

[What cleaning are you doing differently now than before COVID?](#)

Custodial Services is currently cleaning and disinfecting every shared space in every City building once a day, every day of occupancy. All told, we have custodians working 7 days a week (weekdays in most City facilities, weekdays + weekends in our Police facilities and 911 Emergency Communications Center).

In addition to the revised cleaning schedule detailed above, we are using a number of new cleaning products designed to help eliminate harmful viruses, such as those that cause COVID-19. Our current arsenal of disinfectants includes CDC-10, Halt, Diffense, and most recently, a restaurant-grade Sani-T-10 Plus. These disinfectants are applied by our custodians using either hand-held misting sprayers or electrostatic guns (hand-held or backpack). These newer tools provide a much more thorough and efficient application of the disinfectants than previous methods.

Finally, every custodian, as well as their leadership team, is now an [Accredited Infection Disease Expert issued through the Academy of Cleaning Excellence](#).

[I am in City Hall, but frequently visit other City buildings. What other buildings do you clean?](#)

General Services is responsible for cleaning the following City facilities:

- 911 Backup Center
- Beechwood Cemetery
- City Hall

- City Hall Annex
- Community Development
- District One Substation
- DPD Garage
- DPR Administration
- Fire Administration
- Fire Station One
- General Services
- Maplewood Cemetery
- McDougal Substation
- Morreene Road Center
- Police Headquarters
- Sign and Signal
- Solid Waste
- Teen Center
- WI Patterson

The remaining City facilities are cleaned by the building's landlords, in-house staff, or contractors, depending upon the building.

[Plexiglas dividers are common now at stores and other businesses in Durham. Are these in place in my office? If not, how can I get one?](#)

General Services has installed Plexiglas dividers in a number of locations across various City facilities. By and large, these dividers have been reserved for areas with the most potential for regular interaction with the public, such as customer service desks or public lobbies.

Additional requests for Plexiglas installation must go through department leadership and will be vetted by Risk Management and General Services.

It's important to all of us at General Services that you feel confident in our ability to help provide you with a safe and healthy working environment. If you have any questions about the information detailed above, please contact Kevin Lilley at Kevin.Lilley@DurhamNC.gov.