

A PMP's Guide to COVID-19

Zach Devries, Extension Specialist

Entfact-651

The world is currently facing a pandemic with little historical precedence. In the face of this challenge, the pest management community is tasked with taking measures to limit the spread of this virus, while still performing our work at a high level. In light of this challenge, it is essential that we remember the vital importance of our work, which is at the forefront of protecting public health throughout our communities. To help our industry continue to perform our essential work while also recognizing we have a responsibility to prevent the spread of this virus, we make the following recommendations:

1. **Keep your team safe:** It is imperative that you take all necessary precautions to ensure technicians can continue to perform their essential work. Particular items to keep in mind:
 - a. **Limit office time for all personnel:** Provide technicians with extra supplies, stagger start time to limit personnel overlap, consider allowing personnel to keep vehicles at home, etc. If meetings/training are required, consider online options (where appropriate).
 - b. **Restrict group activities:** This includes in-person training, team meetings, etc.
 - c. **Screen clients:** Ask those customers requiring indoor service about any signs of illness in the last two weeks (cough, fever, etc.) and take all necessary precautions.
 - d. **Limit client-technician contact:** Don't let clients touch technicians (handshakes) or their belongings (phones, tablets, clipboards, pens, etc.). As recommended by the CDC, maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet.
 - e. **Wash hands regularly.** This includes before and after each job, before and after visiting the office, etc. Try to equip all vehicles with hand sanitizer.
2. **Contact customers prior to arrival:** Although not always possible, contact customers prior to arrival to ensure they are still comfortable receiving service. During this contact, it is advisable to inform the clients of the procedures you are taking in response to the virus and to ask of any requests they may have during your visit.
3. **Limit treatments to exterior only:** Residential accounts are often serviced primarily on the exterior. Such treatments should be of minimal concern given the spatial separation between individuals.
4. **Prescribe/perform indoor service only as 'necessary':** We define necessary as either a pest of public health importance (e.g. cockroaches, bed bugs, rodents, fleas, etc.) or an active infestation that is impacting daily life (large ant infestation, termite swarm, etc.). Under these circumstances remind customers to maintain at least 6 ft from technicians during the service, and for technicians to be cognizant of the same. Wearing disposable gloves and shoe covers can help to assure customers you are taking the current health crisis seriously.
5. **Don't be what you're not:** Refrain from making any claims about preventing disease or sanitizing the house. It is important to not make any statements that could be interpreted

as a control effort against COVID-19. We control urban and structural pests only, and it is critical that our work isn't misinterpreted.

6. **Develop a team plan:** Using the suggestions described above, along with those found on other sites, we recommend you develop a team plan and distribute this to all your employees. It is essential that everyone is on the same page and properly prepared to work under new (and rapidly changing) procedures. We suggest you provide daily reminders (via text, email, etc.) including any changes in procedure, so everyone is well prepared.
7. **Remember, pest management IS 'essential':** In the coming days some service providers will be deemed 'non-essential'. Be prepared to actively describe your work as essential given how it protects public health (e.g. cockroaches and asthma, mosquitoes and disease transmission, etc.) and building infrastructure. If not addressed now, it is likely pest problems and associated public health risks will increase and place increased burden on an already exhausted health care system.

I know this is a challenging time, but our industry has always taken great pride in being innovative and rapidly responding to challenges. It is imperative that we are all cognizant of the situation and prepared to keep our teams safe, while continuing to protect the health and wellbeing of our customers.

For additional information related to COVID-19, please see the following:

- CDC-General Info (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)
- CDC-Fact Sheets (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>)
- NPMA (<https://npmapestworld.org/member-center/coronavirus-update/>)
- Kentucky Department of Public Health (<https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19>)
- University of Kentucky (<https://www.uky.edu/coronavirus/>)

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Matt Christiansen (Critter Control of Lexington), Charlie Asberry (All-Rite Pest Control, Inc.), Matt Schaffer (IPM Pest and Termite), Keith Smith (Action Pest Control, Inc.), Donnie Blake (OPC Service), Mike Potter (University of Kentucky) for helpful discussions and reviews of this material.