UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PUBLIC RESTROOM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION

October 9, 2020

The Environmental Health & Safety Department (EH&S) provides the following guidance to University units to incorporate public restrooms into their unit or site-specific COVID-19 prevention plans.

BACKGROUND & RISK REDUCTION

The modes of COVID-19 transmission occur from mucous membrane exposure to respiratory droplets during close contact (within 6 feet) with an infected individual. This is the primary route of COVID-19 transmission identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

To effectively minimize COVID-19 risk, it is important to implement multi-layered strategies. In order of effectiveness, workplaces should focus on eliminating the hazard by keeping people with symptoms from entering the workplace, maintaining a physical distance of six feet between people, using engineering controls (e.g., exhaust ventilation), administrative controls (e.g., staggered break times), and enforcing face covering requirements.

Workplaces should combine interventions together, along with encouraging good hygiene and frequent handwashing. All strategies must be customized for the work environment and should include methods that address multiple modes of transmission.

Shared restrooms: Restrooms must be provided for employees and they must be accessible, clean and sanitary, according to the Washington Administrative Code 296-800-23020, in addition to the Seattle Building Code, Tacoma Building Code, and Bothell Building Code requirements.

**Required COVID-19 prevention measures in public/employee restrooms:**

- No restricted access to the restrooms; no locking of the entrance door into the restroom from inside for multiple use bathrooms
- Face covering worn at all times in the restroom
- Handwashing facilities with soap and warm water available and stocked
- Daily cleaning and disinfection of restrooms by custodial staff
- Signage posted outside with maximum occupancy (see Restroom Capacity section of this document)
- [Handwashing signs](#) posted next to sinks
Recommended best practices for COVID-19 prevention in public/employee restrooms:

- Touchless trash receptacles or open access to trash bins
- Hand paper towels available and stocked; individual paper towels are recommended and preferred over air dryer use when possible. If air dryers are present, surfaces and areas where water can accumulate should be cleaned and disinfected daily.
- If the restroom has exhaust fans, run them continuously, in accordance with the UW Facilities building readiness guidelines. If the restroom doesn't have an exhaust fan, open windows, if possible.
- Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more as much as possible in the restroom (except when inside a stall with partitions).
- Recommended restroom etiquette:
  - Wait outside if all fixtures (i.e., stalls and urinals) are occupied.
  - Turn away when toilet is flushed.
  - Wait to enter stall (about one minute) after the previous occupant flushes.
  - Keep duration inside restroom as short as possible.

RESTROOM CAPACITY

The restroom capacity that allows for maintaining at least a 6-foot distance between people is dependent on the physical configuration of each restroom, including the number of stalls/urinals and stall arrangement. Suggested occupancy levels are based on number of stalls within the restroom. For restrooms with a single stall or toilet alone, the occupancy is one.

*Figures 1 and 2: Examples of single occupancy restrooms*
Restrooms that have a stall and a urinal with a separation barrier in between can have an occupancy limit of two.

Figure 3: Example of a double occupancy restroom

Restrooms with more stalls may increase the occupancy level commensurate with the number of separate stalls. The multi-stall restroom in Figure 4 has a capacity of three people due to the presence of three stalls. The multi-stall restroom in Figure 5 has a capacity of six people due to the presence of four stalls and two of the four urinals.

Figure 4: Multi-stall restroom

Figure 5: Multi-stall restroom

It is important that users maintain physical distancing as much as possible after exiting the stall, and they exit the restroom after hand washing.
CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Follow the [EH&S COVID-19 Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols](https://ehs.washington.edu) for cleaning and disinfecting areas not covered by University custodians, which may include single occupancy restrooms inside private offices.

Please respect custodial staff while they are cleaning a restroom and use another restroom.

**RESOURCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UW EH&amp;S Cleaning &amp; disinfection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UW COVID-19 Facts &amp; Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="https://example.com/seattle.png" alt="Seattle" /></td>
<td><a href="https://example.com/2015-building-code">2015 Seattle Building Code</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="https://example.com/cdc.png" alt="CDC" /></td>
<td><a href="https://example.com/cdc-guidance">What to do if you’re sick</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>