

Social Distancing for a Better Tomorrow

Social distancing, a word previously widely unknown and almost exclusively used by public health officials, has become a new and most important aspect to not only our society but our business landscape. Once rarely used by the general public, the word has recently become a widely used word in our international lexicon, as individuals and business operations alike become more-and-more use to its integration into our language and operations. This would include operations in all aspects of businesses—both public and private and, of course, not particularly sparing public service operations.

According to the CDC's [Coronavirus website](#), social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

The importance of social distancing involves ensuring that the COVID-19 virus can essentially not spread via airborne or by surface contamination. The virus is purportedly able to survive and present a threat for up to three (3) days on surfaces. According to [Harvard's School of Public Health](#), available evidence suggests this is the case for up to about three (3) days on hard surfaces like metal or plastic and about one (1) day on soft surfaces like cardboard. Thus, the importance of washing hands often, as well as disinfecting and cleaning surfaces that experience a high volume of exposure, such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, et cetera.

This is important information to note for both individuals associated with the water and wastewater industry, as well as any other industry. Even when disinfecting equipment or supplies used in normal business operations—whatever those items specific to an industry might be—it is imperative to at least be conscious and informed that these items could potentially be contaminated and, therefore, one must take appropriate precautions.

Also, it is important to remember to be cognizant of your surroundings when you encounter large masses or locations, when you notice a large number of individuals that are not practicing social distancing or donning appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks that cover an individual's mouth and nose. This is an important consideration since one can contract the virus when encountering infected individuals, especially those who are coughing or sneezing.

Additional tips for social distancing from the [CDC](#) include:

- Following guidance from authorities where you live
- If you need to shop for food or medicine at the grocery store or pharmacy, stay at least 6 feet away from others
 - Use mail-order for medications, if possible
 - Consider a grocery delivery service
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others, including when you have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store

- Stay at least 6 feet between yourself and others, even when you wear a face covering

As a result, being aware that a disease, such as the COVID-19 virus, is circulating may trigger a change in behavior by people choosing to stay away from public places, services and other people. Overall, this can have impact on business operations. Social distancing can produce benefits for both healthcare and public health but may also come with an economic cost to some business operations. While most public services will always have a demand, it is vital that we not only understand but remember why we social distance at times.

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