

## Slowing the Spread of Flu in School Facilities

A stomach flu outbreak was the cause of more than 800 student absences in a single day at a suburban high school. School officials believe that *norovirus*, a stomach flu illness, was the cause of the absences. Due to the high number of student absences, the school closed down for a period of two days so that maintenance staff could thoroughly disinfect facilities to minimize further spread of the virus.

*Norovirus* is a highly contagious virus that can be transmitted from an infected person, contaminated food or water or by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus causes an inflammation of the stomach and/or intestines, which leads to stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Norovirus outbreaks occur throughout the year, with the majority of occurring from November to April. When a person contracts norovirus, the virus may be present in their vomit or stool even before they begin to feel sick. The virus can remain in the stool for up to two weeks, even after the person is feeling better. Norovirus sufferers may remain contagious for two days even after their physical symptoms subside.

When an outbreak of norovirus occurs in a school, one of the biggest challenges is to disinfect the facility to slow down the spread of the virus. The following information, excerpted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a number of helpful tips for slowing the spread of norovirus and related influenza in school facilities.

### 1. Know the difference between cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing

**Cleaning removes germs**, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

**Disinfecting kills germs** on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.



Follow your school's standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting.

**Sanitizing lowers the number of germs** on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

### 2. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often

Follow your school's standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting. Typically, this means daily sanitizing of surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys. Some schools may also require daily disinfecting of these items. Standard procedures often call for disinfecting specific areas of the school, like bathrooms.

Immediately clean surfaces and objects that are visibly soiled. If surfaces or objects are soiled with body fluids or blood, use gloves and other standard precautions to avoid coming into contact with the fluid. Remove the spill, and then clean and disinfect the surface.

### 3. Simply do routine cleaning and disinfecting

It is important to match your cleaning and disinfecting activities to the types of germs you want to remove or kill. Most studies have shown that the flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for up to 48 hours after being deposited on a surface. However, it is not necessary to close schools to clean or disinfect every surface in the building to slow the spread of flu. Also, if students and staff are dismissed because the school cannot

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function normally (e.g., high absenteeism during a flu outbreak) it is not necessary to do extra cleaning and disinfecting.

Flu viruses are relatively fragile, so standard cleaning and disinfecting practices are sufficient to remove or kill them. Special cleaning and disinfecting processes, including wiping down walls and ceilings, frequently using room air deodorizers, and fumigating, are not necessary or recommended. These processes can irritate eyes, noses, throats, and skin; aggravate asthma; and cause other serious side effects.

### 4. Clean and disinfect correctly

Always follow label directions on cleaning products and disinfectants. Wash surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs. Rinse with water, and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Read the label to make sure it states that the EPA has approved the product for effectiveness against influenza A virus.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Be sure to read the label directions carefully, as there may be a separate procedure for using the product as a cleaner or as a disinfectant. Disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period of time (e.g., letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes).

Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. Pay close attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes. It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time. Make sure that the electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.

### 5. Use products safely

Pay close attention to hazard warnings and directions on product labels. Cleaning products and disinfectants often call for the use of gloves or eye protection. For example, gloves should always be worn to protect your hands when working with bleach solutions.

Do not mix cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death.

Ensure that custodial staff, teachers and others who use cleaners and disinfectants read and understand all instruction labels and understand safe and appropriate use. This might require that instructional materials and training be provided in other languages.

### 6. Handle waste properly

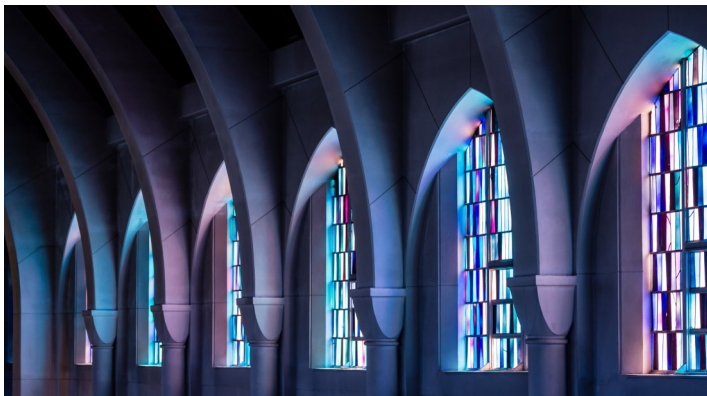
Follow your school's standard procedures for handling waste, which may include wearing gloves. Place no-touch waste baskets where they are easy to use. Throw disposable items used to clean surfaces and other items in the trash immediately after use. Avoid touching used tissues and other waste when emptying waste baskets. Wash your hands with soap and water after emptying waste baskets and touching used tissues and similar waste.

### 7. Learn more

Log on to the CDC's website to obtain additional articles and resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/guidance.htm>

-Information excerpted from <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm> and "The Flu: A Guide for Parents," published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Facility Assessment Plan and Preventive Maintenance Program



A Facility Assessment Plan and Preventive Maintenance Program is a risk management tool dioceses can use for keeping track of the physical condition of church, school, housing and other buildings and grounds. This tool helps the diocese to identify and define building and facility status, maintenance requirements and related expenses for budget planning purposes. The components and action items that comprise this plan include the following:

### 1. Identify Buildings and Grounds

The Assessment Plan initially requires putting together an inventory of buildings and grounds system components. Examples of buildings and grounds components include parking lots and exterior lighting, landscaping, heating and air conditioning (HVAC), roofing, plumbing and electrical, fire protection systems, security systems, etc.

### 2. Inspection of Buildings and Grounds

Performing an initial inspection of the buildings and grounds helps to assess the current state of the facilities and provides the diocese with a baseline resource for the provision of maintenance and any necessary future repairs. Emphasis should be placed on building plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems.

### 3. Analysis of Building and Grounds Status and Future Needs

Upon completion of the buildings and grounds inspections, analyze the results to determine if preventive maintenance or repairs need to be made. This analysis may require the use of qualified contractors to supplement in-house expertise.

### 4. Create a Repair Plan

Put together a repair plan schedule that ranges from the most important tasks to the least important (such as rewiring electrical systems, overhauling the sprinkler system, lawn care, plumbing, etc.). Maintenance plans should be specific to the site and adapted to local circumstances, work methods and utilization of space.

### 5. Implement a Preventive Maintenance Plan

Create a detailed resource for maintenance procedures, including a monthly maintenance schedule, scope of work for outsourced bids, and cost estimates for recommended maintenance. In addition, determine any future cost estimates for the repair/maintenance of building and grounds components and budget for unexpected emergencies. The Preventive Maintenance Plan should ensure that building and grounds operations function smoothly.

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## Facility Assessment Plan and Preventive Maintenance Program

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### 6. Submit Program to Pastor/Principal/Director for Approval

Provide the Pastor/Principal/Director and Parish/School/Housing Finance Committee with a copy of the program along with all findings and recommendations for repairs for budget implementation. The Assessment and Preventive Maintenance Plans can be documented on a spreadsheet for ease of use.

#### Sample Facility and Maintenance Assessment Checklist

##### Facility Assessment Overview

- Facility, building and component inventory.
- Existing physical condition of each facility, building and component.
- Define facility and building use.
- Probable cost to remedy physical deficiencies.
- What investments need to be made, initially and long-term?
- Prioritize costs and investments.
- Define a reasonable budgetary funding process.

##### Assessment Survey

- Structural and foundation condition survey
- Parking
- Roof
- Exterior walls
- Plumbing systems
- Electrical systems
- Mechanical systems
- Infrared thermal imaging

##### Assessment Report

- Photographs and written documentation.
- Assessment of the property's interior and exterior conditions, systems and components.
- Detailed inventory of facility and building component quality, expected useful life, remaining useful life, and current replacement cost.
- Suggested remedies for physical deficiencies.

*-Information excerpted from Facility Assessment Plan and Preventive Maintenance Program MP<sup>3</sup> published by Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc., Boca Raton, FL.*

## Common Slip, Trip and Fall Exposures

The following are hazards that can contribute to slip, trip and fall exposures. Keep these items in mind when performing facility self-inspections.

- ✓ Poor housekeeping
- ✓ Excessively waxed floors
- ✓ Uneven walking surfaces
- ✓ Loose or frayed carpeting
- ✓ Lack of handrails/loose handrails
- ✓ Electrical cords in aisles/walkways
- ✓ Stairway treads and nosings in poor condition
- ✓ Interior and exterior walking surfaces and parking lots in poor condition
- ✓ Inadequate indoor and outdoor lighting, especially entrance and exit areas
- ✓ Lack of procedures for snow and ice removal
- ✓ Broken or deteriorated pews, kneelers and confessionals



## Maintenance 8-Point Daily Checklist for Parish Schools

Performing daily inspections is critical to maintaining safe school facilities. The following checklist provides some guidelines to follow for performing this type of evaluation.

##### Main Entrances/Travel Paths:

- ✓ No water on doorway or hall floors
- ✓ Doorway entrance and exit level
- ✓ Mats secured and in place
- ✓ Tripping hazards (carpets, cords, equipment) removed
- ✓ Door closure properly adjusted
- ✓ Exit lights and emergency lighting in hallway working properly

##### Playground:

- ✓ Proper ground cushioning material (approximately 9") around fall pattern of equipment
- ✓ No broken steps, handholds, rungs, seats
- ✓ Equipment anchored securely without movement (anchors covered)
- ✓ Spacing of equipment (minimum of 6') provided between equipment
- ✓ Bolts/fasteners tight and not protruding more than 1/8"
- ✓ Maximum of two swings per bay
- ✓ No metal or sharp objects from equipment
- ✓ No trip hazards
- ✓ Playground fenced and gate secured

##### Flammable Liquids/Chemicals:

- ✓ Flammables stored in proper containers (UL-listed container or flammable storage locker)
- ✓ Janitorial closets locked
- ✓ No leaking chemicals or odors in janitorial closet
- ✓ Aerosols kept out of reach of all students (check classrooms)
- ✓ Chemicals in science lab secured in cabinet (shelf has raised lip to prevent falling)
- ✓ Chemical containers properly marked
- ✓ Chemical container lids closed
- ✓ Flammable liquid rags kept in self-closing trash can and emptied every night
- ✓ Chemical inventory developed and available, Safety Data Sheet (SDS) maintained for each chemical
- ✓ Chemicals, oil/hydraulic fluid and paint are properly disposed

##### Traffic Control:

- ✓ Proper traffic control flow arrows installed
- ✓ Check for the presence of any vehicle(s) blocking traffic or flow
- ✓ Traffic flow marked (cones, flaggers) during school openings or closings
- ✓ Traffic control personnel wearing orange vest with flag/paddle
- ✓ Teachers available to supervise school patrols
- ✓ Bus drop-off area clear
- ✓ Students clear of bus stop or parent drop-off areas

##### Parking Lot:

- ✓ Sidewalk is level
- ✓ No potholes in travel path

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## Maintenance 8-Point Daily Checklist for Parish Schools

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- ✓ Wheelchair ramps available where needed
- ✓ Parking bumpers secured/rebar properly set and painted yellow for visibility
- ✓ Parking stalls and aisles marked
- ✓ Traffic control signs legible and posted in view of drivers
- ✓ Landscaping not blocking drivers' vision

### Security:

- ✓ Employees have ID badges displayed
- ✓ Mechanical rooms are locked
- ✓ Electrical panels secured from tampering
- ✓ Secondary doors are locked
- ✓ Perimeter protection secured (no signs of intrusion or vandalism)
- ✓ Surveillance system is working (if installed)
- ✓ Look for any unknown persons or visitors onsite not wearing ID badges
- ✓ Radio working and front office communications checked
- ✓ Internal and external building security lighting installed and functioning
- ✓ Building and facility checked for stay-behinds before closing for the day
- ✓ Bushes and shrubs trimmed from building

### Maintenance Shop:

- ✓ Aisles are clear
- ✓ Stock, equipment and tools are stored in an orderly fashion
- ✓ Portable power tool cords are free from splices/cuts
- ✓ Only extension cords with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) are used
- ✓ Electrical installations meet National Electric Code (flex cord not used in lieu of fixed wiring)
- ✓ Guards are present on woodworking equipment, mowers, tractors, and other machinery
- ✓ Guards are present on portable power tools (e.g. chainsaws, cutting tools)
- ✓ Flammable/combustible liquids are stored in UL-approved flammable storage cabinets
- ✓ Personal protective equipment (eyes, face, hearing and hand protectors) is available
- ✓ Overhead storage is properly secured to avoid head injuries or collapse
- ✓ Ladders in good condition and not damaged
- ✓ Shop secured when unattended
- ✓ Pesticides stored outside in properly ventilated room
- ✓ All 110v electrical outlets that are located outdoors, near water or within the maintenance shop are equipped with GFCIs

### Restrooms:

- ✓ Floor surface free from water or wet conditions
- ✓ Towel dispensers are filled and located properly
- ✓ No plumbing leaks
- ✓ Restrooms are clean and in good sanitary condition
- ✓ Emergency light(s) are installed and functioning
- ✓ Routinely inspect restrooms throughout the day

## Preparing Facilities for Spring



As spring approaches, it is important to inspect and prepare buildings for the upcoming warm weather months. The harsh weather conditions of winter can leave behind deterioration and problems with the building's gutters, downspouts and air conditioning systems.

### Gutters and Downspouts

Malfunctioning gutters and downspouts can lead to roof damage or erosion problems in the areas that surround the building. Pools of water from leaking or ineffective gutters and downspouts can cause flooding problems on the ground and in basements and other low levels. To avoid these problems, gutters and downspouts should be inspected and repaired on an annual basis. Below are some of the problems to look for along with tips for repairing these issues.

#### Dirt, Debris and Settling

Nearby trees, pebbles from asphalt shingles and dirt can cause gutters to clog. In addition to the hazard of clogging, the dirt and debris weighs down the gutters, causing them to settle. When the gutters settle, the added weight of snow melt and rain prevents them from draining properly, causing them to pull away from the roof. When this happens, there is a chance that the wood on the roof may begin to rot.

To determine if the gutters have settled, take a look at the corners during the next rain or spray a water hose onto the roof. Watch to see if the corners begin to leak. If they leak, the gutters are not draining correctly and need to be repaired.

In addition, have gutters cleaned on an annual basis to prevent clogging and settling.

#### Loose Downspouts

Another common maintenance issue is downspouts that break loose or become disconnected from the gutter itself. Check the building for loose downspouts. To fix loose downspouts, push the downspout back together and drill a couple small holes into the two pieces. Fasten the pieces together with sheet metal screws.

#### Overflowing Rain Gutters

This is often the result of a clogged gutter or downspout. To fix the problem, clean out the area of the gutter where the clogging is occurring. In some situations, the cause is due to having too small of gutters to handle the rain water. If this is the case, larger rain gutters should be installed.

#### Pooling Water Near Downspouts

To prevent water from pooling around the downspout and building, make sure it runs off well into the yard or another area away from the building. Use a downspout extension or other flexible tubing to re-route the runoff away from the building.

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## Preparing Facilities for Spring

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### Air Conditioning Maintenance

An appliance you won't want to be without when the first warm days of spring arrive is the air conditioning unit. The information below is excerpted from the U.S. Department of Energy and outlines the steps you can take to maintain your building's air conditioning system for peak performance during the spring and summer months.

An air conditioner's filters, coils, and fins require regular maintenance for the unit to function effectively and efficiently throughout its years of service. Neglecting necessary maintenance ensures a steady decline in air conditioning performance while energy use steadily increases.

#### Air Conditioner Filters

The most important maintenance task that will ensure the efficiency of your air conditioner is to routinely replace or clean its filters. Clogged, dirty filters block normal air flow and reduce a system's efficiency significantly. With normal air flow obstructed, air that bypasses the filter may carry dirt directly into the evaporator coil and impair the coil's heat-absorbing capacity. Keeping the filter clean can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5 to 15 percent.

For central air conditioners, filters are generally located somewhere along the return duct's length. Common filter locations are in walls, ceilings, furnaces, or in the air conditioner itself. Room air conditioners have a filter mounted in the grill that faces into the room.

Some types of filters are reusable; others must be replaced. They are available in a variety of types and efficiencies. Clean or replace your air conditioning system's filter or filters every month or two during the cooling season. Filters may need more frequent attention if the air conditioner is in constant use, is subjected to dusty conditions, or you have fur-bearing pets in the house.

#### Air Conditioner Coils

The air conditioner's evaporator coil and condenser coil collect dirt over their months and years of service. A clean filter prevents the evaporator coil from soiling quickly. In time, however, the evaporator coil will still collect dirt. This dirt reduces air flow and insulates the coil, reducing its ability to absorb heat. To avoid this problem, check your evaporator coil every year and clean it as necessary.

Outdoor condenser coils can also become very dirty if the outdoor environment is dusty or if there is foliage nearby. You can easily see the condenser coil and notice if dirt is collecting on its fins.

Be sure to minimize dirt and debris near the condenser unit. Dryer vents, falling leaves, and lawn mowers are all potential sources of dirt and debris. Cleaning the area around the coil, removing any debris, and trimming foliage back at least 2 feet (0.6 meters) allows for adequate air flow around the condenser.

#### Coil Fins

The aluminum fins on evaporator and condenser coils are easily bent and can block air flow through the coil. Air conditioning wholesalers sell a tool called a "fin comb" that will comb these fins back into nearly original condition.

#### Condensate Drains

Occasionally pass a stiff wire through the unit's drain channels. Clogged drain channels prevent a unit from reducing humidity, and the resulting

excess moisture may discolor walls or carpeting.

#### Window Seals for Room Air Conditioners

At the start of each cooling season, inspect the seal between the air conditioner and the window frame to ensure it makes contact with the unit's metal case. Moisture can damage the seal, allowing cool air to escape from the building.

#### Trees and Shrubs

Winter storms that bring wind, snow, ice and heavy rain can cause a lot of damage to trees and shrubs. Take time to visually inspect trees and shrubs for damage and to ensure they are a safe distance from power lines or similar hazards. Remove broken or dead limbs and branches from trees and shrubs. Consult with a contractor for the removal of trees and for trees that may be dangerously close to power lines and power sources.

Trim healthy trees and bushes on a regular basis throughout the spring, summer and early fall months and make sure limbs and branches are kept away from buildings. Unkempt branches can cut into the paint or siding of a building causing damage. Regular trimming and maintenance of landscaping also reduces the hazard of potential perpetrators/vandals hiding in areas covered by overgrown foliage.

#### Sidewalks and Walkways

Sidewalk liability is a growing issue as court cases have determined that the responsibility for safe walkways is the responsibility of the property owner. Many accidents occur on sidewalks due to structural problems such as uneven, cracked or broken surfaces. When addressing sidewalk issues, consider the following:

##### Inspect Sidewalks Regularly

This is one of the most important actions you can take to protect your organization against sidewalk incidents and liability. Evaluations can be made in-house by maintenance staff or by a qualified contractor.

##### Determine the Root Cause of Sidewalk Problems

Examine each problem on an individual basis and address each repair with the appropriate strategy.

##### Select the Right Repair for the Job

There are three primary repair methods. These include concrete replacement, concrete raising, and concrete grinding.

##### Implement a Repair Plan That Fits Your Budget

Begin a documented repair plan and schedule sidewalk repair in phases to accommodate your budget. Scheduling repairs for a future date will meet the property owner's "duty of care" requirement.

##### Select the Right Vendors

Utilize the correct specialist for the repair. Be careful of hiring "jack-of-all-trades" contractors. They will typically recommend a more expensive repair alternative since it is more profitable for them. Utilize a grinding specialist for grinding repairs, a raising specialist for raising repairs and a concrete contractor for replacement.

##### Re-inspect Sidewalks Regularly

Sidewalks continually shift and move due to ground settlement, tree roots and weather conditions. Conduct on-going inspections and document repair plans to provide protection in the event of a lawsuit.

##### Avoiding Weather-related Slips and Falls

To avoid slips and falls related to weather conditions, use mats or rugs near doors to dry shoes.



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