

Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning Filter Change-Out Guidance

Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the virus that causes COVID-19, spreads primarily from droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. These droplets are typically too heavy to hang in the air and quickly fall to the ground or other surfaces. While virus in aerosols may remain in the air, the airborne concentration would be very low in ATO facilities and it is not likely that the virus will be drawn into the ventilation system and travel through the ducts, exhausted and then recirculated into the building.

Other guidance states that the spread of coronaviruses from person-to-person over long distances, such as through HVAC systems, has not been shown. While OSHA recommends increasing ventilation rates and installing certain types of air filters, there is no recommendation to change the filters after a reported confirmed case of COVID-19.

Recommendations

In response to questions and concerns surrounding routine HVAC filter changes, the ATO recommends/advises the following:

- 1) There is no requirement or need to replace or change HVAC filters after a Level 3 Cleaning or confirmed case of COVID-19 has been reported.
- 2) Replace or change HVAC filters as described in the maintenance handbooks/manual, with no change from the normal procedure(s), and/or in accordance with current applicable maintenance alerts.
- 3) No additional or specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) is required during filter replacement or change out, other than what is normally worn during this task.
- 4) As an added measure of precaution, whenever the filter change-out or replacement is performed, ensure that it is at least three days after a Level 3 Cleaning, if applicable. Scientific data has shown that the virus is detectable in aerosols for up to three hours, up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to *two to three days* on plastic and stainless steel.