

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

WORKPLACE ENGINEERING CONTROLS FOR SARS-COV-2

Engineering controls involve isolating employees from work-related hazards. In workplaces where they are appropriate, these types of controls reduce exposure to hazards without relying on worker behavior and can be the most cost-effective solution to implement. Engineering controls for SARS-CoV-2 include:

- Installing high-efficiency air filters
- Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment
- Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards
- Installing a drive-through window for customer service
- Specialized negative pressure ventilation in some settings

Note:

Filtration in building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can be a part of an overall risk mitigation approach but is not generally regarded as a solution by itself. There is no direct scientific evidence of benefit, but some reduced exposure can reasonably be inferred based on the ability of some filters to remove particles that contain a SARS-CoV-2 virus. More importantly, in most buildings and in most situations, filters may be considerably less effective than other infection control measures including social distancing, isolation of known cases, housekeeping and hand-washing. <https://www.nafahq.org/covid-19>

Increase maintenance procedures focused on delivering clean air:

- Replace air handling unit filters on a regular and consistent basis
- Clean air handling coils and cabinets on a regular semi or annual basis
- Look at increasing the Minimum Efficiency Rating Value (MERV) rating of your filters. The higher the rating, the more airborne particulates you will capture.
- Increase if possible filtered outside/fresh air supply coming into building
- Initiate an HVAC preventive and scheduled maintenance program and tracking system

Always consult the HVAC unit manufacturer for proper cleaning products and maintenance procedures.

For more information go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/engcontrols>