COVID-19 is the singular topic currently dominating everyone’s lives and thoughts worldwide. Each passing day new information is revealed, as more questions arise. What is this virus? Where did it come from? Is it okay to drink wine this early in the day? And, most importantly, how can we protect our staff and community from the continued spread of this virus?

Recently I had the privilege of hosting a webinar with an amazing panel of speakers to answer many of these pressing questions. I was joined by John Echelmeir of BELFOR Property Restoration, Tammy Lomax-Krapf, CMI, CIEC, and Jill Asch, MPH, CIH, CSP of Hillmann Consulting, all of whom have been on the frontlines protecting businesses and communities from the spread of COVID-19.

While I leave it to your sound discretion as to the best time to pull the cork on that bottle of wine (“It’s five o’clock somewhere,” right?), here are the top questions and answers we discussed with our esteemed panel:

**What protective equipment should employees be utilizing?**

The CDC currently recommends that everyone wear a face mask/covering when not isolated at home. The CDC is also recommending that N95 and other professional masks be reserved for use by healthcare and other frontline professionals. The World
Health Organization, CDC and OSHA have all issued guidance documents on PPE usage in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information can be found [here](#).

**When should employees use protective equipment in their daily activities?**

Face masks should be used, especially when social distancing practices cannot be met. Additionally, state and local orders are requiring the use of the face coverings when working in essential businesses (e.g. supermarkets, pharmacies etc.).

**Can employees reuse protective equipment such as masks or latex gloves?**

Face masks can be used until they become damaged, soiled, or difficult to breathe through. If you run out of face masks, a reusable cloth face shield can be used and washed regularly. Gloves are, for the most part, intended to be disposable and used only one time. However, if needed, gloves can be hand-washed by soaking them in warm water and dish soap for 10 minutes.

**What level of cleaning/sanitizing should companies be conducting on an ongoing basis?**

Companies should clean and disinfect their workspaces daily as a precautionary measure. Regular cleaning procedures should include an EPA registered disinfectant, specifically on the EPA List N, which specifies disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2, and with a focus on frequently touched surfaces.

**Is there a prescribed method to properly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces?**

OSHA and the CDC offer guidance on cleaning and disinfecting your facility. Wearing gloves and a mask (or other required equipment depending on the safety data information of the product being used) while cleaning is recommended. Areas or items should be cleaned with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty, followed by the use of a disinfectant. Disinfecting directions per the safety data information or information on the EPA list (such as contact times) should be followed carefully.

**How should electronics such as smartphones, desktop computers, keyboards or other such items be disinfected?**

Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics and follow the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning and disinfecting. If there is no manufacturer guidance, you should use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to clean or disinfect. Make sure to dry surfaces thoroughly.

COPYRIGHT © 2020, STARK & STARK