

# Guidance on the handling of objects which are a potential source of COVID-19 contamination

## Issue

Current understanding of COVID-19 indicates that the risk posed to others by objects exposed to persons affected by COVID-19 is relatively low, and can therefore be effectively mitigated if simple actions are attentively undertaken. In doing so, authorities and the public can have confidence that the risk of COVID-19 contamination has been effectively mitigated, allowing the necessary handling of goods upon arrival at Ascension.

## Principles

Measures should seek to ensure:

- The community is sufficiently safeguarded from unchecked direct transmission of COVID-19.
- Anyone handling goods is aware of the risk mitigation actions to be followed and is therefore personally safeguarded against transmission of COVID-19.

## Background

Ascension is reliant on air transport for the delivery of certain critical, and non-critical, goods to the territory. As these goods are transported by air they are likely to have been handled by individuals in an affected area within the last 24 hours. Equally, arrivals to Ascension may handle objects between the point of arrival and to the location at which they will be observing compulsory isolation, such as motor vehicles. As a result these objects pose a possible risk of COVID-19 contamination to the wider community.

Experiments have demonstrated that COVID-19 virus can survive for up to 24 hours on cardboard<sup>1</sup>. However, in a real life scenario there will be many other factors which affect the virus' ability to survive on surfaces. It is currently thought that warmer temperatures and sunlight will reduce the virus' ability to survive on surfaces<sup>2</sup>. As such, following repeatable reliable steps will ensure that goods and objects can be safely handled without risk of COVID-19 contamination.

In general, thorough cleaning with soap and water, as well as cleaning with disinfectants, will help to kill germs and prevent COVID-19 contamination from occurring.

## Application

### [Operating procedure for the handling of goods and objects delivered by air from an affected area](#)

1. Avoid direct contact with any persons from the affected area and observe appropriate social distancing at all times.
2. Wear disposable gloves throughout the cleaning process.
3. If it is a hard surfaced object:
  - a. Use an appropriate cleaning agent for the type of surface, such as disinfectant, soapy water or anti-bacterial wipes and clean all exposed areas thoroughly.
  - b. If using a particular cleaning product, ensure that you follow the directions on the label.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19/questions-answers/questions-answers-various>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/reopening\\_america\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/reopening_america_guidance.pdf)

4. If it is a soft surfaced object:
  - a. Leave for at least 24 hours
5. If a disinfectant fogging machine is available:
  - a. Follow the instructions for the product as directed for use with the object or surface type in question.
6. After following cleaning protocols as directed remove your gloves and other PPE, and wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soapy water, or alternatively use antibacterial hand wash.

Operating procedure for the handling of goods and objects used by someone under compulsory isolation, or restrictions short of compulsory isolation

1. Avoid direct contact with any persons under compulsory isolation conditions, or restrictions short of compulsory isolation, and observe appropriate social distancing at all times.
2. Wear disposable gloves throughout the cleaning process.
3. If it is a hard surfaced object:
  - a. Use appropriate cleaning agent disinfectant, soapy water or anti-bacterial wipes and clean all exposed areas thoroughly.
  - b. If using a particular cleaning product, ensure that you follow the directions on the label.
4. If it is a soft surfaced object:
  - a. Leave for at least 24 hours
5. If a disinfectant fogging machine is available:
  - a. Follow the instructions for the product as directed for use with the object or surface type in question.
6. After following cleaning protocols as directed remove your gloves and other PPE, and wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soapy water, or alternatively use antibacterial hand wash.

Operating procedure for the handling of vehicles used by an arrival from an affected area or anyone subject to compulsory isolation, or restrictions short of compulsory isolation

1. Avoid direct contact with any persons from the affected area, or anyone subject to compulsory isolation or restrictions short of compulsory isolation, and observe appropriate social distancing at all times.
2. Wear appropriate PPE, such as gloves and a face covering, throughout the cleaning process.
3. If a disinfectant fogging machine is available:
  - a. For the interior:
    - i. Close the windows and doors of the vehicle.
    - ii. Fog the interior for the amount of time directed by the product's instructions.
    - iii. Once the directed amount of time has passed, open the windows and doors to allow the vehicle to appropriately air as directed by the product's instructions.
  - b. For the exterior:
    - i. Wipe down areas that may have been touched by vehicle user (such as door handles) with an appropriate cleaning agent (disinfectant, soapy water or anti-bacterial wipes).
    - ii. If using a particular cleaning product, ensure that you follow the directions on the label.
4. If it is not possible to clean vehicle with a disinfectant fogging machine:

- a. If the user of the vehicle has been tested by Georgetown Hospital staff and received a negative result for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours:
    - i. Open the doors and windows and allow the vehicle to ventilate for an hour.
      1. Where possible, ask the previous user to leave the doors and windows open in advance.
    - iii. Wipe down areas that may have been touched by vehicle user (such as door handles, steering wheel, gear stick, radio, etc.) with an appropriate cleaning agent (disinfectant, soapy water or anti-bacterial wipes).
    - iv. If using a particular cleaning product, ensure that you follow the directions on the label.
  - b. If the user of the vehicle been tested by Georgetown Hospital staff and received a positive result for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, or has not yet been tested for COVID-19 following their arrival to the island:
    - i. Leave the vehicle for at least 24 hours.
    - ii. Open the doors and windows and allow the vehicle to ventilate for an hour.
      1. Where possible, ask the previous user to leave the doors and windows open in advance.
    - iii. Wipe down areas that may have been touched by vehicle user (such as door handles, steering wheel, gear stick, radio, etc.) with an appropriate cleaning agent (disinfectant, soapy water or anti-bacterial wipes).
    - iv. If using a particular cleaning product, ensure that you follow the directions on the label.
5. After following cleaning protocols as directed remove your gloves and other PPE, and wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soapy water, or alternatively use antibacterial hand wash.