



## **Clearing the air on COVID safety in commercial spaces - by Gandolfo Schiavone & Ryan Schiavone**

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Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus has changed the way we interact with indoor space. Offices in New York City remain mostly empty, with a recent survey showing that only about

15% of the Manhattan workforce is expected to return by the end of the year. Restaurants, houses of worship and movie theaters are only operating at a fraction of their normal capacity, if they are open at all. Broadway theaters and concert halls remain dark.

People want to get back to work and back to normal life, and as the cold winter temperatures set in, commercial property owners want to welcome tenants and customers back inside. We need to start looking at how to open these spaces up safely and make people feel comfortable returning.

For commercial properties to be as safe as possible, the top priority must be Indoor Air Quality (IAQ). There are three factors that, in combination, will improve the IAQ in a space and combat any potentially unhealthy conditions.

The first is ventilation, meaning that you need fresh air to flush the facility. The second is filtration, or the ability to capture the particles. And the third is air purification, which reduces airborne and surface microbials, as well as bacteria, viruses, odors and particulates.

The CDC recommends MERV 13 filters and in New York, part of the government's mandate for reopening is that facilities must install them in HVAC systems.

MERV 13 filters will capture a significant number of particles of a certain size, but they will not catch everything. Relying on filters alone is also not going to solve the problem posed by COVID-19 because, while filters may capture particles found in the air, they do not neutralize the air itself.

This is where air purification is beneficial. Air purification is an ionization process that either produces positive and negative ions or hydroxyl radicals, which are dispersed into the condition spaces to combat surface and airborne microbials, bacteria and viruses.

Essentially, hydroxyl radicals recreate the quality of the outside air. Therefore, by using an air purification system, you are replicating the effect of activities such as dining or holding a meeting outdoors, which can be especially important in spaces that do not let in much outside air. It only takes a short period of time for these products to be effective, allowing clean air to circulate in the space for the entire day.

Our employees, who are represented by Local 355 of the United Service Workers Union (USWU), work with a Halo System that has been used in medical, food, residential, commercial and government applications. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we chose to offer this particular system to our clients because it was already known to neutralize and reduce the appearance of many diseases and pollutants found in the air, including H1N1, Norovirus, Strep, E Coli, Legionella and Mold. We can now add COVID-19 to that list.

Recently, an independent lab successfully tested the Halo System on the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. The test simulated a cough or sneeze from an infected person within an enclosed space. The system was able to reduce the virus on contact, resulting in the elimination of 99.9% of the virus, both in the air and on surfaces.

Just by putting an air purification system in your office building, retail store, movie theater, restaurant or other place of business, you can not only neutralize the threat of COVID-19 but also eliminate airborne and surface microbials, allergens, dust, particulates, and other contagious diseases.

Regardless of what product you choose, it is important to follow all state safety guidelines. But of all the products on the market, those offering air purification are the best option for not only keeping your tenants and customers safe but also giving them the peace of mind to be confident in the security of their environment.

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