

ICOM Pandemic Guidelines

The [ICOM International Committee for Conservation \(ICOM-CC\)](https://icom.museum/en/covid-19/resources/conservation-of-museum-collections/) has created a series of “pandemic guidelines” on how to deal with conservation during the emergency, putting employee safety first. They can be found at <https://icom.museum/en/covid-19/resources/conservation-of-museum-collections/>

IN GENERAL

1. Recommendations worldwide encourage public institutions to close down until the threat from corona virus is no longer an issue. **Only essential staff should be in your institution.** This may include security, engineering, and the occasional conservator or collections manager.
2. Prepare lists of staff/expertise who will be on regular duty and others who are available. **Establish collaborations with nearby museums** or similar institutions to make necessary staff replacement or arrangements in the case staff members of one museum get infected.
3. Viruses deteriorate relatively quickly on surfaces, but **can remain active up to 72 hours** and different surfaces cause different rates of virus deterioration.
4. **Undertake more frequent cleaning of areas where people have access on a daily basis.**
5. Consider changing the filters in HVAC systems. Where HVAC systems are not installed, consider other type of **regular controlled ventilation of collection and storage areas.**
6. In the case of documented infections, **quarantine** the relevant area(s) for at least two weeks or until access is safe.

IN EXHIBITIONS

The first recommendation world-wide is still to close all public gathering sites including exhibition areas for the foreseeable future, and promote social distancing. If this is not possible in your region, please consider instituting the following:

- Limit access to exhibition spaces to help visitors distance themselves. Generally, 1.5m is recommended as the distance between individuals. The museum opening hours may be limited – 4 hours instead of the usual 8 – or staggered so that there are fewer people at a given time in a particular area.
- At the entrance: Install disinfecting gel dispensers and/or ensure that visitors have access to washrooms with soap and hot water. Place signage encouraging visitors to keep hands clean and away from their faces.
- Remove audio guides and similar items that are on display for ‘touch and try’ purposes.
- Installations with activating buttons must be cleaned frequently with sanitisers.
- Restrict access to installations that cannot be thoroughly cleaned or disinfected.

CLEANING EXHIBITION SPACES

- Follow your usual instructions with respect to wet/dry cleaning but increase the cleaning frequency to at least once per day.
- For vitrines and similar surfaces, water, soap and disinfectant spray (i.e. 70% iso-propyl alcohol or ethanol) can be applied as long as they are not used on objects on display.

Beware of certain materials and coatings that are susceptible to alcohol (Plexiglas, shellac varnishes etc).

- Ensure that the cleaning staff is trained. If possible, use staff that is already familiar with the collections and the appropriate cleaning procedures in the area.
- Objects on display must only be cleaned by trained conservators or trained collection professionals.

IN STORAGE AND WORK AREAS (WITHOUT PUBLIC ACCESS)

- Limit handling of collections, if possible.
- Ensure that all staff has easy access to hand wash facilities with hot water and soap, disinfection gel, and disposable gloves.
- Ensure that only a limited number of people work in the same room (maximum 5) and maintain a safe distance from one another. Generally, 1.5m is recommended as the distance between individuals.
- Larger groups of staff may divide up and work on alternate days to maintain safe distance from one another.
- Divide your staff in teams with only the same team members working together.
- Wash and disinfect hard surfaces, handles, door knobs, light switches, coffee-machines, and the like with great frequency.
- Masks, even homemade cloth masks, can be worn primarily to remind staff not to touch their faces.
- Museums should have a quarantine area for objects. This area should have empty shelves, cabinets, boxes, where invested objects with a minimum of touching/handling can be separated from the main collection, as well as an easy marking system indicating the dates, what, why and by whom the objects have been put in quarantine.