

VRMA/VRHP Reopening Guidelines for COVID-19

June 25, 2020



As communities and businesses begin to reopen and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that vacation rental managers undertake careful planning and coordination to ensure the safety of their employees, guests, and community. To assist with reopening safely, the Vacation Rental Management Association (VRMA) and the Vacation Rental Housekeeping Professionals (VRHP) have developed guidelines for reopening as part of the SafeCommunity™ campaign.

Applicable to properties in all U.S. markets, the guidelines were developed with industry experts from around the country, including Dru Brown of [Island Time Hilton Head](#) and the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, who led the comprehensive [Path Forward Readiness initiative](#) in South Carolina.

The new guidelines focus on employee and guest safety, enacting preventive and protective measures, communications protocol, and measures to stay safe in the home and when using the property's amenities.

VRMA and VRHP recommend that professional vacation rental managers adopt these protocols as a roadmap to ensure the safe reopening of their properties. The guidelines are below.

Employee Safety

- Train employees on proper handwashing hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and other safety measures they should take when entering a property. Focus heavily on proper mask (<https://vimeo.com/400609879>) and glove usage (<https://vimeo.com/402661872>).
- Create a schedule for enhanced cleaning and designate employees to perform the sanitization protocols.
- Communicate with employees regularly regarding their health status and the health of anyone with whom they may be in close contact. Send home any staff member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, in contact with someone with COVID-19, or is otherwise feeling ill. Request that staff members notify management if they have traveled to a [COVID-19 “hot spot”](#) as designated by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).
- Conduct daily temperature checks of employees.
- Develop and post a COVID-19 safety plan that addresses social distancing, cleaning and sanitization, guest flow, use of PPE (personal protective equipment), and personal hygiene.
- Provide employees with PPE and sanitary materials:
 - Provide masks and disposable gloves they can use on property.
 - Provide hand sanitizer to be used after leaving a property.

- Limit exposure of employees by:
 - Allowing extra housekeeping time to be allocated to existing turnover timeframes. How much time is a business decision for each company.
 - Requiring employees to maintain six-foot distance from guests at all times.
 - Dispatching a maintenance technician or third-party vendor if an issue is truly something that needs to be handled immediately, while the guest is still in residence. Nonessential maintenance visits should be severely limited or restricted.
- Refer to the [VRHP/VRMA Cleaning Guidelines for COVID-19](#) for additional guidance on employee safety, disinfection, sanitization, and proper PPE usage.

Communicating with Guests

- VRHP/VRMA recommends using the word “sanitize” rather than “clean” in any communications with guests.
- Inform guests of the different city or community guidelines created by COVID-19 and remind them to bring their own masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, etc. This could be a communication from the community that is sent with confirmation email.
- Provide guests with a link to your COVID-19 information webpage. Information that VRHP/VRMA recommends is:
 - Safety guidelines your properties are following.
 - Sanitation practices of your employees, such as the [VRHP/VRMA Cleaning Guidelines for COVID-19](#).
 - Employee and property policies for COVID-19.
 - State guidelines or ordinances related to COVID-19.
 - How to contact property or home owners with questions.
- Place signage in the unit reminding guests to practice social distancing in public areas.
- Provide letter at check-in or in room detailing precautions you are taking to ensure the health and safety of guests.

Home and Amenities

- Consult with property HOAs on protective measures to be taken with pools and other amenities, including limiting number of guests using the amenities at any one time, six-foot spacing of pool chairs, increasing sanitization of all furniture and gates, and providing hand sanitizer in relevant areas.
- Clean and sanitize guest rooms, public areas, spas, and other amenities with disinfectant. Refer to the [VRHP/VRMA Cleaning Guidelines for COVID-19](#) for additional guidance.
- Create a system to “seal” rooms to reassure guests that no one has entered the room after it was sanitized.
- Remove high-touch, nonessential items such as books, reading materials, ice buckets, decorative pillows, and bed runners; deliver to room upon request only.
- Sanitize TV remotes and add note or packaging to indicate they have been disinfected.
- Sanitize pool chairs between uses.

Check-in Procedures and Facilities

- When confirming reservations, notify guests it will not be possible to accommodate early arrivals due to additional cleaning and sanitization protocols.
- Require guests to sign a waiver that includes a health screening of COVID-19 symptoms.
- Require electronic payment from guests.
- If you have a check-in facility:
 - Limit number of guests in the building, tape or mark six-foot spacing at counter and waiting lines for social distancing, require guests to wear masks and provide hand sanitizer near entrance.
 - Acrylic sneeze guard shields at front desk.
 - If front of building has more than one door, designate one for entry and another for egress.
 - Space furniture in lobby, waiting area and offices to allow for six-foot social distancing.
 - Schedule appointments to control flow of guests.
- If possible, implement “contactless” check-in via email and keyless entry to properties.
- If you don’t have keyless entry, sanitize keys prior to turning them over to guests.
- Create system for package pickup and inform guests of the procedures.
- Create protocol for delivery of equipment, such as cribs, after a property has been sanitized.
- If possible, provide online or mobile app reservations and pre-payment to reduce customer-employee contact.

Telling Your Story

- Consider placing a “This property has been properly cleaned and sanitized for your arrival” door hanger on the front door or put other signage in the property.
- Create a page on your website or blog that outlines what you are doing to clean, sanitize, and disinfect and keep guests safe.
- Send an email to your database of guests informing them of all you are doing to clean, sanitize, and disinfect to ensure that properties are safe.
- Consider adding a sentence to each property listing description stating that your properties are clean and safe for arrival and ready for the guests’ vacation.

Disclaimer: *These voluntary guidelines are for the information of VRMA and VRHP members. Each business owner must decide for itself which cleaning and related practices to implement. These guidelines are derived in part from federal agency regulations and recommendations, but they do not constitute legal or medical advice, nor do they necessarily take into account the various requirements of all states, counties, and municipalities. VRMA and VRHP make no warranty or representation that following these guidelines will ensure the health of employees, clients, guests, or others, or preclude the possibility of contamination. While these guidelines are intended to be comprehensive, they do not contain all available information on the subject matter. These guidelines were prepared based on available information existing at the time of publication and therefore may be superseded by later developments.*