

Disinfecting County Vehicles

As the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to spread, we are learning that the virus can live on surfaces for an extended period. COVID-19, like many respiratory viruses, is spread through respiratory droplets released from the mouth and nose. A single cough can produce up to 3000 of these droplets. A person can become infected by inhaling these droplets or by touching a surface contaminated with them and then by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coming into contact with contaminated surfaces is not thought to be the primary way the virus spreads; however, caution should be exercised in shared spaces, such as county vehicles with multiple drivers.

Cleaning Products

There are numerous high-touch surfaces (e.g., steering wheel, door handles, shift lever) in vehicles. According to Jeff Stout, executive director global innovation at Yanfeng Automotive Interiors, the world's largest supplier of automotive interior parts, nearly all interior surfaces in a vehicle can be cleaned with isopropyl alcohol, including soft cloth upholstery. Yanfeng uses isopropyl alcohol to clean interiors at their factories and have tested their interiors to ensure they will not degrade when exposed to pure isopropyl alcohol.

To kill COVID-19, use a cleaning solution that has at least 70% isopropyl alcohol. Bleach and hydrogen peroxide can kill the virus but also can damage the vehicle interior. If isopropyl alcohol is not available, then soap and water can kill the virus. Coronaviruses have a protective envelope that can be destroyed by soap killing the virus; however, the soapy water must be supplied with enough friction to destroy that en-

velope to be effective. For a list of cleaning products effective against COVID-19, visit <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>. Note that not all of these products are safe to use on the various interiors in a vehicle. Check the label before use. The CDC recommends that surfaces be cleaned at least daily.

Areas to Clean

Vehicles have numerous touchpoints, so cleaning efforts should focus on those. In addition to cleaning the door handles, key fobs, and the steering wheel, the dashboard should also be cleaned. According to Charles P. Gerba, professor of microbiology and public health at the University of Arizona, the dashboard is "the worst site in terms of total number of bacteria, [because] air is constantly being sucked over and circulated inside the car." The outside of the vehicle is less likely to carry the virus because the sun and weather can break it down; however, door handles and other exterior touch points like the gas flap should be cleaned regularly. Wash or disinfect hands after handling gas pump handles or using gas station keypads.

What This Means for Counties

To slow transmission of COVID-19, county vehicles driven by multiple people should be disinfected regularly, especially high-touch areas such as the steering wheel and dashboard. For more information about COVID-19, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. You may contact CTSI at (303) 861 0507. 