



NARA COVID-19 Response

Fact Sheet #3, version 2: How to sanitize work surfaces and use hand sanitizer around records

May 26, 2020

This fact sheet provides guidance to help protect NARA staff and reduce the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the workplace. This version has been updated to amend procedures to allow for the use of quaternary ammonium as an alternative to alcohol-based cleaners.

Sanitizing surfaces where records are worked or handled.

Always remove all record materials from the surface prior to spraying surfaces with disinfectant solutions.

The preferred method to sanitize surfaces where records are worked or handled is to spray a mixture of at least 70% isopropyl alcohol and water from a spray bottle onto the surface. Make sure the surface is fully wetted and then wipe dry with a paper towel. This is the CDC-recommended method for killing the virus and doesn't leave a residue that can damage the records. This guidance also applies to exhibit cases and other surfaces (but not artifacts) in museum exhibits. As a note, the prolonged use of any alcohol disinfectant may remove finishes on wood and may cause cracking or swelling of polymer surfaces such as acrylic vitrines.

If isopropyl alcohol is not available at your facility, bleach-free sanitizing wipes can be used on surfaces where records are worked or handled. The surface should be allowed to dry completely, then wiped with a damp cloth or paper towel, and then allowed to dry completely again. To the extent possible, you should always wash your hands with soap and water after using wipes and before handling records. The damp paper towel and hand washing will remove any wipe residue that may damage the records.

How to obtain isopropyl alcohol:

- At Archives I and II, Research Services, Conservation Branch (RXC) will provide a mixture of at least 70% isopropyl alcohol and water. LB&B is already using this mixture to clean the research rooms. *The mixture that the Conservation Branch had provided to staff previously does not contain enough alcohol to effectively kill the virus. Please bring your current spray bottle to the Conservation Branch for the new solution.*
- At all other facilities, your Administrative Officer or Facility Manager will coordinate with the GSA facility manager (at GSA facilities) or the janitorial contractor (at other

facilities) to implement. Isopropyl alcohol can be purchased without green dye, but it may need to be diluted. Isopropyl alcohol with concentrations higher than 70% can be diluted with tap water. The exact mixture of water to alcohol will depend on the percentage of the original solution. Please refer to the dilution formula on the Safety Data Sheet or contact the Conservation Branch with any questions about handling or diluting the isopropyl alcohol.

Do not use any wipes that contain bleach on surfaces where records are worked or handled. Many wipes do not contain bleach, so look for ones labeled bleach-free. Many bleach-free wipes contain alcohol as the disinfectant.

As an alternative to isopropyl alcohol, the EPA recommends quaternary ammonium cleaners for use against human coronavirus. These solutions may be gentler on some surfaces but care must be taken to completely remove any residue. Surfaces cleaned by quaternary ammonium disinfectants may still change over time due to repeated chemical activity. Many quaternary ammonium disinfectants can be sprayed onto the surface and then wiped away with a damp paper towel: Always follow product directions when applying quaternary ammonium cleaners. If streaking occurs, use a clean paper towel, dampened only with water, to remove the residue until no streaking is observed. “Triple Quick” from State Industrial Products and “Q.T. 3” by Hillyard are quaternary ammonium compounds that have been reviewed by NARA and meet the EPA emerging viral pathogen requirements.

How to obtain bleach-free wipes or quaternary ammonium cleaners:

- At all facilities, your Administrative Officer or Facility Manager can coordinate with the GSA facility manager (at GSA facilities) or the janitorial contractor (at other facilities) to implement if you choose to use these alternate products. Always purchase the colorless version of any product to avoid any unnecessary chemicals and dyes. Follow the directions on the product for proper use. Remember to use a water-damp paper towel to remove residue from the surface cleaned with either a wipe or a quaternary ammonium cleaner.

Using hand sanitizer around records.

Hand Sanitizer often contains ingredients that can transfer to records and cause damage or staining.

To the extent possible, staff should always wash their hands with soap and water after applying hand sanitizer and before handling records.

Hand sanitizer will continue to be provided outside research rooms for the public. Staff should not request that researchers wash their hands, as it cannot be enforced.

Point of Contact: If you have questions or comments, please contact the Preservation Programs Division (RX) at preservation@nara.gov.