



April 1, 2020

To: All Domestic Employees

From: Pandemic Working Group

Re: COVID-19 – Pandemic Progress/Shared Surfaces/Masks

Revised Outlook. Yesterday, former FDA Commissioner Steven Gottlieb, updated his outlook on the COVID-19 pandemic during which he revised his original prediction (that the pandemic would not exceed a few hundred thousand cases) to the effect that diagnosed cases would likely reach into the several-hundreds-of-thousands. He reported that April would be the month of greatest spread, particularly in urban areas that have been late to implement restrictions (e.g., in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Michigan). He believes that we should see a peak in cases within New York over the next 7 – 10 days and expects relief on social protocols no sooner than May.

This is consistent with President Trump's update, during which he predicted that April would be the "hardest month" as the virus approaches its peak over the next few weeks. This rise is understandable given that, according to FEMA, over one million individuals have now been tested in the US to date. The President also predicted that COVID-related fatalities in the US could reach 100,000 or more. This number may be driven, in part, by the concentration of cases in areas such as New York, where the healthcare infrastructure is being strained. Interestingly, as of yesterday, New York had nearly 75,000 cases, while California was closer to 8,000.

Shared Surfaces. Dr. Gottlieb stated further that an important pathway for transmission of this virus may be "shared surfaces," citing as anecdotal evidence a case in Michigan where 70 people contracted the virus in the course of a single meeting. Indeed, CDC observes that the virus may remain viable on surfaces for hours to days. Accordingly, he recommends that we wash our hands, use hand sanitizer and make an effort to clean surfaces (whether at home or at work) and to be mindful of, and to wash our hands after touching, shared surfaces such as cart handles, doorknobs, touchscreens, keypads, stylus pens, railings and other structures in public places.

Transmission by Air & Use of Masks. According to CDC, it is unknown how long air inside a room that has been occupied by a confirmed COVID patient remains potentially infectious. Further, there has been speculation that asymptomatic persons (who are infected) could spread the disease unwittingly. To this, Dr. Gottlieb points out that wearing a mask or, for that matter, a bandana, can cut transmission to other people. However, there are two important considerations regarding masks. First, N95 masks and surgical masks are in short supply for healthcare workers, and, as per CDC's recommendation, persons who are not healthcare professionals should allow the supply to catch up with the demand. Second, even if one chooses to wear a mask or other covering, the entire purpose is defeated if that person keeps adjusting the mask, thereby contaminating his or her hands and potentially spreading the virus on surfaces.

Bottom Line

To help contain the contagion, Dr. Gottlieb recommends that, in addition to social distancing (and self-isolating when sick) we wash hands frequently, keep shared surfaces clean and, above all,

not touch our faces. In the interest of keeping the workforce safe for employees, we have implemented social distancing protocols and redoubled efforts to keep surfaces clean at our facilities. We appreciate the measures that many of you have taken to reinforce these efforts.

If you have questions on any of these matters, please contact either Kelly Willmott (kellyw@amvac.com) or Tim Donnelly (timd@amvac.com).