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Lessons & Notes on Cooling Tower Replacement

FEATURES

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Adapt and Carry On

Reducing Viral Transmissions
in Building Air Systems

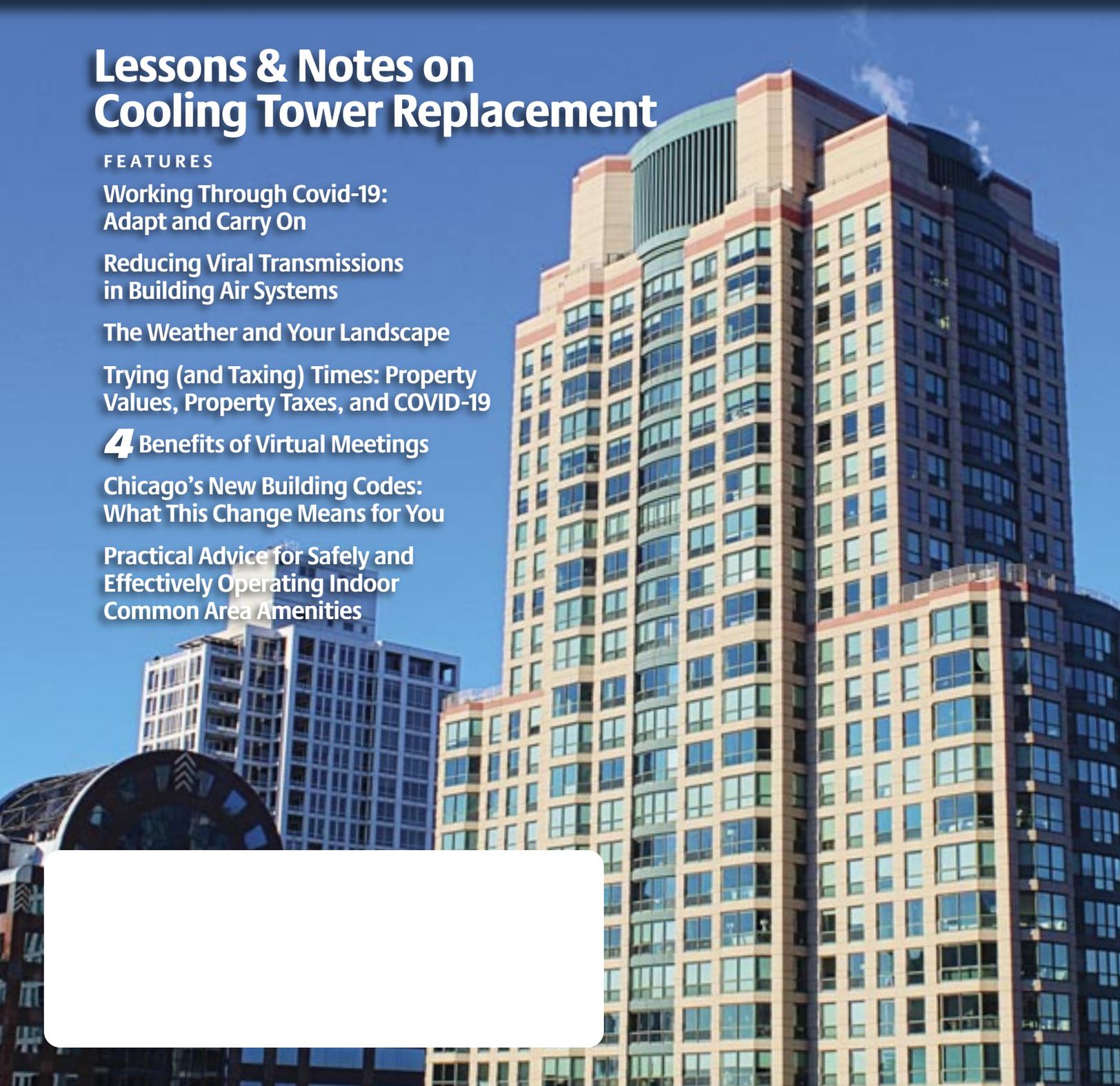
The Weather and Your Landscape

Trying (and Taxing) Times: Property
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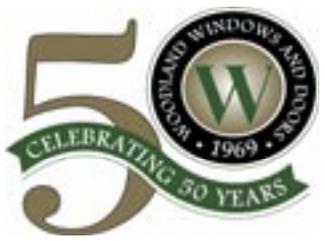
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by Angela Williams Duea

Lessons & Notes on Cooling Tower Replacement

Located along the Magnificent Mile corridor, Chicago Place is a mixed use building that is home to a number of offices, a shopping mall, and 205 condominiums. The condominiums in the building are the 100 East Huron Condominium Association which offer all the amenities you would expect in a building of this caliber including valet parking, indoor pool, 24-hour doorman, fitness center and more.

The Board of Directors and management at 100 East Huron have been deliberate and forward thinking about maintaining all of their mechanical equipment over the years. In 2017, the Association collaborated with Elara Engineering on energy conservation measures. The association improved performance of the building air handlers and exhaust systems, and converted the boiler system from electric to high-efficiency condensing gas boilers. When all the efficiencies were considered, including the source generation and delivery of electricity versus natural gas, the new high efficiency natural gas boiler system uses approximately one-third the energy of the old electric boiler system.

The conversion was estimated to pay back the association in less than five years and yield a 23 percent return on investment. However, the association exceeded those projections by nearly 40 percent, with cost savings of \$447,000 to date. As a result of these changes, the Chicago high-rise improved from an Energy Score of 31 to 67. The updates earned the association the City of Chicago Retrofit Chicago Energy Challenge as a member of the Retrofit Chicago Mayor's Leadership Circle for Outstanding Energy Efficiency Achievement at the time.

More recently, FirstService Residential's property manager Mitch Kesler, at 100 East Huron, successfully helped the association manage the replacement of their cooling towers. Together with project manager Brian Waters of Hayes Mechanical, their planning notes and lessons learned are valuable information for other community association leaders.

Begin Earlier Than You Think

Timing is important in any HVAC project, and it's even more important with a chiller or cooling tower project since the cooling season is short. "A few months is not enough time to complete the project," says Kesler. "Start the project at the end of previ-



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➤ *Helicopter lifting cooling tower from Michigan Avenue. The two cooling towers were lifted in six separate pieces.*

ous cooling season so you have enough time to plan properly and to manage any project delays.” For his cooling tower replacement at 100 E.Huron,they began planning in October 2019 for an install in March 2020. He found that being the first building in line for the project in 2020 gave his board a discount on the price.



➤ *Cooling tower after installation on roof of 100 East Huron.*

Watters suggests allowing at least ten weeks for the project. “You need a long runway to make all the arrangements. Anytime you’re doing large equipment projects downtown on mid to high-rises, it becomes a high-pressure project. You only get one shot and you have to get it right the first time.” Careful planning, and a clear distribution of responsibility is key to success.

The Vendor Selection

When requesting a bid from a vendor, pay attention to the process they use to analyze the building’s conditions and any obstacles to finishing the job. The vendor should pay close attention to current conditions, and plan for issues with stairs and elevators, residents and street situations. The best engineering companies can suggest approaches that save money or maximize energy rebates and other incentives.

At 100 E. Huron, Kesler’s reserve study planned a cost of \$528k, but Hayes Mechanical’s winning bid came in at \$358k. They were able to use the rest of the budgeted amount to include upgrades, including a variable frequency drive well. As the mechanical contractor, Hayes sourced the subcontractors, piping, mechanical equipment and materials.

In the Thick of the Project

“A project like this comes down to months of planning for one day of activity,” says Watters. “A big part of that activity is preparing people for the shutdowns and vacancy that is necessary to clear the area.” In mid-to-high-rises, the new equipment is usu-

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ally raised by crane or helicopter. This necessitates shutting streets, since the work crew essentially needs the area cleared in a 100-foot radius around the helicopter and along its path of travel. The floors directly below the mechanical room are usually vacated, and lobbies and parking garages are often closed during the lift.

Hayes Mechanical begins a project with an orientation meeting giving the 10,000-foot view of the process. "I don't like to bury board members in information during the first meeting, because they will absorb fine details better later on in the project," Watters says. At the second meeting, he goes into further detail on the process to lift the equipment and how the closedown and vacating process will happen. A week or two before the installation date, Watters follows up on the progress of notifications, goes over the project checklist and does a final walkthrough.

The engineering and property management team divides up the responsibility early in the process, and checklists or project plans are helpful to keep all team members on track. If the company is using a crane, the company or the property manager will need to coordi-



➤ Shown here is a pipefitter working on cooling tower piping.

nate with Chicago Department of Transportation and the Chicago Police for a street closure of up to 72 hours. Helicopter lifts may use a smaller closure window, usually around two hours. Property managers may also have to arrange crowd control, sidewalk closures, notifications to residents and commercial tenants, and last-minute reminders. As a best practice, they might even plan to get employees into

the building by back passages.

"The managers and our project leads do a lot of door knocking to contact local businesses to let them know what's coming up, and when the streets and sidewalks will be shut down," says Watters. "From our perspective, our most critical success factor is a helpful property manager who will consider all the people who will be impacted, and what



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➤ Pictured above is the preparation of the cooling tower pieces before the helicopter lift on Michigan Avenue.

they need from the project team to cooperate during the lift.” Affected people should be told several times what they need to do, when they need to do it, and how long they will be affected. Rarely do people refuse to cooperate, but when they do, a property manager with good interpersonal skills is indispensable for smoothing over the situation.

The Wrap-Up

Once installation is done, the techs startup the system and check vital signs before signing off on the project. A maintenance contract may be enacted, and it is a good time to draw up a plan for the best way to care for the equipment. Good preventive care will stretch the lifespan of the new system.

This is also a good time to solicit feedback

from residents to improve manager support in future projects. Sometimes residents have very little reaction to the project since they may not even be impacted by the installation day. Kesler says, “Our residents were pleased that what we budgeted was more than we needed. The remainder was rolled into another project.” He thinks the biggest reaction comes from prospective buyers who ask questions about when the systems were replaced. “They know the value of new, energy-efficient mechanicals, and it’s a good selling point.”

The projects in this article were completed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Any projects of this nature done now would have Covid-19 health and safety protocols in place, and your engineering firm and/or contractor should have clear guidance and plans to guide you.

There are always lessons to be learned from any capital project, but sharp attention to detail and efficient communicators are key success factors. Add in top-notch engineering and mechanical contractors along with strong project leadership skills, and your cooling tower project should run like clockwork. 🍃

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By Pamela Dittmer McKuen

Working Through Covid-19: Adapt and Carry On

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, building owners, managers and contractors at commercial and multi-family residential property carry on by adapting to a “new normal” -- and working through it as we all wait for it to be over. The good news is, most are figuring out how to get their jobs done and how to work around the occasional glitches.

It's been a difficult, confusing, scary and certainly interesting year. Back when the World Health Organization on January 30 declared a global health emergency, most of us felt little cause for alarm. We'd heard about viruses before, and most were oceans away.

Then Americans started dying.

In early March, Gov. J. B. Pritzker began issuing a series of orders to minimize public gatherings in an attempt to slow transmission of the new novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Schools were closed, and bars and restaurants were banned

from indoor dining. The strongest order, on March 20, contained a shelter-at-home mandate for all but “essential workers.” Anyone who could work from home was urged to do so.

Included on the list of essential workers and businesses are building management and maintenance, construction and utility workers, grocery and hardware stores, first responders and health care workers.

On May 5, Gov. Pritzker announced a 5-stage regional reopening plan contingent on meeting certain metrics. As of this writing, the state of Illinois is in Stage 4, which means

movie theaters, fitness clubs and restaurant dining rooms may open with limited capacity. Group functions are capped at 50 people. The 5th and final stage will not commence until a vaccine or highly effective treatment becomes widely available.

COVID-19 continues to rage through the world with 23 million known infections and 800,000 known deaths. Illinois' daily numbers decreased and then went back up again. If the trend continues upward, Illinois could revert to earlier stages.

Like many business sectors, commercial real estate has been forced to revamp its procedures and adapt its operations. Chicagoland Buildings & Environments checked in with several management pros and contractors to see how they are faring with today's realities.

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Here's what we learned:

Workplaces Are The Virtual Reality

The shelter-at-home mandate sent thousands of workers to home offices, where they quickly learned to communicate with their superiors and colleagues via a slew of computer programs and phone apps. Despite contradicting studies on whether at-home workers are more or less productive than office workers, jobs are getting done.

Productivity is "better than I thought it would be," said Tim Conway, commercial portfolio manager at Golub and Company in Chicago. "We are getting where we need to be."

Even before the pandemic, some employees at Chicago-based Habitat Co. had begun to work in the Microsoft Teams communication and collaboration platform. The shelter-at-home mandate forced company-wide participation and greater use of the platform's many facets and features. Those who were more skilled shared their knowledge with those who were not, and the IT (information technology) crew created short training videos explaining the platform's different features.

"We were working in this environment for some time, getting more and more use out of how Teams operates," said Sheila Byrne, executive vice president of property management at Habitat. "We haven't seen any decrease in productivity, so we've been very fortunate there."

Virtual meetings and conferences may be the norm today, but they do have limitations. Most participants agree they are not as helpful or meaningful as meeting in person.

"There are technical issues, calls get lost or the internet breaks up," Conway said. "They are

not ideal, but they work."

"One con is the in-person conversations and contact you have with your colleagues and coworkers aren't happening," Byrne said. "You lose some of those conversations around the water cooler or running into someone in the copy room."

For Gene Weisskopf, president at Admiral Security Services in Skokie, weekly virtual staff meetings have been positively received by his retinue of door personnel. Not having to travel is a huge benefit.

"We're a 24-hour operation," he said. "When we have a staff meeting, there is always someone who has to come in on their day off or someone who worked the night before and has to come back the next day for an hour meeting. Now they can be at home and do the meeting."

In his view, virtual meetings are not as productive as in-person meetings, but they are sufficient. Admiral may continue with them when the pandemic is over.

Offices Are Open But Mostly Empty

Many offices have opened, often with shorter hours and occupancy limitations. Other companies around the country, including Google, Viacom and Amazon corporate, have announced that their employees will work from home until the end of the year or longer.

"We do have rotating schedules, so we can limit the number of team members in the office at any given time and have proper social distancing," Byrne said. "It's somewhere between 20 and 25 percent."

At Golub, corporate workers can work from home through the end of the year, and they may be in the office with restrictions.

Employees are divided into red and blue teams for even- and odd-numbered days and are encouraged to go in only on their designated days. The number of people in the office is monitored.

Golub's on-site managers, who are deemed essential workers, have worked out schedules that keep offices minimally staffed while the others work from home. The flexibility also helps working parents now that schools are going virtual, Conway said.

For many companies, business travel is almost nonexistent. At Habitat, managers can travel within the state to visit properties if they need to, but no one is traveling outside their home states, Byrne said.

Conway, whose Golub portfolio includes a property in Minneapolis, typically visited there once a month. Not anymore.

"The last time I flew up there was February," he said. "Since COVID-19, our company told me I couldn't. In June I was allowed to drive up, and I was fine doing that. Now I'm doing that about every other month."

It's hard to say whether business travel will revert to pre-pandemic levels or not. Byrne envisions a hybrid model. Owners, managers and partners, especially those with established relationships, have learned that decisions can be made and work can be accomplished virtually, and they may wish to continue doing so. In other cases, in-person site visits and inspections may still be needed.

"I don't think virtual meetings will take the place of travel 100%."

Touchless Technology is the Long View

Many people are anxious about being confined in small spaces with others who might be infected or contracting the virus by touching something an infected person touched. Those fears heighten as buildings open and workers return to their desks. Much discussion is going

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on about touchless technology--notably, touchless doors, bathrooms and elevators.

The elevator industry is looking at touchless and sanitation solutions such as ultraviolet disinfection lights, voice-activated controls, foot pedals, air purifiers and pre-programming cars to stop at all or selected floors.

Max Molinaro, senior sale representative at Suburban Elevator in East Dundee, said he's seeing interest in new technologies, but some are unproven or prohibitively expensive, or both. Some are more practical than others.

"If you have a 10-story building, you need 10 foot pedals in each car and two in each hallway, one for up and one for down," he said.

"What do you do for a 55-story building?"

"Touchless technology is a capital spend," Conway said. "For some buildings, it's more of a longer term approach to phase it in throughout. Some already have a lot of it. We will be spending money, and we already have this year. Certainly next year a lot of dollars will be spent in this area."

Habitat has invested in touchless devices in bathrooms and exit doorways and is looking into retrofits in existing buildings, Byrne said.

"Stay tuned," Molinaro said. "There is a lot of stuff in the works. A lot of people have their



Shown here is the MS11 Wave to Open touchless actuator. "The 'Wave to Open' feature has become very popular and is great for restroom door applications or for interior doors connecting a warehouse to an office," according to Mark Oyo of Door Systems. It can be readily used to retrofit push to open button and features an illuminated blue center that changes to green upon signal reception /activation and an adjustable detection zone allowing the adjustable sensing zone from 2-24 inches (pulse or toggle). He adds, "it's universally compatible with all automatic door control makes and models."

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wheels spinning trying to figure out the options.”

In the meantime, we will continue to make do with low-tech methodologies of social distancing signage and floor decals, limits on the number of passengers per elevator car, personal styluses with which to touch buttons, face masks, hand sanitizers and disinfectants. Or we'll take the stairs.

Molinaro brought up another impact the virus has had on the elevator business and presumably many others: “It's made bidding jobs a lot harder,” he said. “They are only allowing a couple of people in at a time to look around.”

Everyone Wants Squeaky Clean and Virus-Free

Celtic Restoration Group, based in Chicago Ridge, has responded to the pandemic and client demands by offering two types of enhanced cleaning service, said Mandy Manalli, director of business development.

“In the beginning, people were interested in regular, everyday cleaning,” she said. “Now they want reactive cleaning.”

Under the Celtic umbrella, “regular cleaning” has been expanded to include extra care to detail and additional time spent to disinfect,

according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, high-touch areas and horizontal surfaces like desks, door handles, elevator buttons and filing cabinets.

“Reactionary cleaning” is an even deeper cleaning done after a building worker or resident tests positive or is assumed to be positive for the virus. It is also done for clients shortly before their workers return to the office to increase everyone's comfort level. Reactionary cleaning includes ultra-low volume spraying or fogging, which lays a thin coat of disinfectant over every surface.

Internally, Celtic is protecting its own workforce of 150 with PPE, or personal protection equipment, and performs regular testing for the virus. The company hired a handful of additional employees, but mostly shifted existing employees for various jobs as needed. Celtic has not raised its prices, Manalli said.

Her thoughts about the future? “Once you go through something like this, you'll be more cautious in what you are doing,” she said. “I also think there are people who will be quick to go back to their old habits. It depends on the customer. The extra steps for high-touch cleaning, I don't know why that would ever go away.”

Safety and Security is a Priority

Daily life has changed for door and security personnel at Admiral Security. They continued to provide service through the shutdown, although some days they were the only ones working in a building while management worked from home, Weisskopf said.

Among new protocols of various condominium and apartment buildings: To reduce the number of people in hallways, food deliveries are dropped off on designated tables instead of to residents' units; residents are called to come down and retrieve them. To avoid cross-contamination on high-touch surfaces, staff no longer open doors for residents. To maintain social distancing, residents may not enter package rooms along with staff; they must wait for staff to retrieve their packages. Passengers are limited to a certain number in elevators. Staff are required to frequently clean high-touch areas like door handles and countertops. Masks are required in common areas.

“Multifamily buildings are a lot quieter because more people are working from home,” Weisskopf said. “They are not leaving in the morning and coming back in the evening. The number of visitors has dropped as people are

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not having their friends and family over. Fewer dog walkers and house cleaning services are coming into the buildings.”

Another change: Staff is handling a marked increase in resident orders of food and merchandise.

“Package deliveries have gone through the roof. Every day is Black Friday” (the biggest U.S. shopping day of the year), he said.

When the pandemic struck, Joshua Mailey, president at Signal 88 Security in Arlington Heights, had two major concerns. “How do we keep our officers healthy and safe, so we are not contracting or spreading the disease elsewhere, but still continue to provide the service our clients are contracting us to do?” he said.

With guidance from the CDC, the private security company enacted strict protocols. Officers were issued protective eyewear, masks and gloves, and training on how to use them. Patrol vehicles are equipped with disinfectant and hand sanitizer. The vehicles are wiped down with disinfectant after each shift to avoid cross-contamination from one driver to the next. After exiting their vehicles, officers must don their masks and eyewear. Only one officer is allowed in the Signal 88 building at a time.

In addition, the daily roll call of officers,

which used to be conducted indoors, now takes place outdoors.

Signal 88 also suspended routine indoor walkthroughs in residential buildings. They continue to respond to calls for service for quality of life issues, and they do exterior patrols and such tasks as pool lockups, and checking doors and security systems.

“We wanted to limit the amount of times we were unnecessarily exposing our officers and residents,” Mailey said.

A few clients pushed back at first, but after Mailey explained they were trying to maintain everyone’s health and prevent virus spread, the questions dissipated.

The Future is Hazy

With all these at-home workers, companies won’t need as much space--or will they? It’s too soon to accurately predict how the pandemic will ultimately impact commercial leasing.

“We have not reduced our space, and we have not had our clients reduce their space as of yet,” Byrne said. “There is a lot of discussion around that. I think there are certain businesses where it is going to be easy for them to cut back on space. I’ve also heard from other tenants who want to take on more space, so they can create

the environment for better social distancing.”

“I think the jury is still out for the long-term trend,” Conway said. “There is the vector that is having more people working from home, and then there is the vector that when you are at work, you need more space for social distancing. I’m not sure which vector is going to win out, but certainly everyone will want the overall highest and best use of their spaces.”

Office design is sure to change, he said. For one, the open office concept in which workstations are placed side by side may disappear. Individual offices with doors will be back.

Social distancing will have a strong influence on office design and redesign in such ways as figuring out traffic patterns, creating core flexible space, and even placing a common printer or copier, Byrne said.

“All the lessons we’ve learned from this pandemic we will be applying to our developments,” she said.

“Adapt and overcome,” Manalli said. 

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By Dustin Langille, BEMP, HBDP, LEED AP BD+C – Elara Engineering

Reducing Viral Transmissions in Building Air Systems

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, building owners and managers have increased their interest in HVAC strategies and products aimed at reducing the airborne transmission of viruses. While current research is still emerging on the specific characteristics of SARS-CoV-2 and its transmission, there is sufficient research on methods to reduce the transmission of other infectious diseases.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has stated the following: “Ventilation and filtration provided by heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems can reduce the airborne concentration of SARS-CoV-2 and thus the risk of transmission through the air. Unconditioned spaces can cause thermal stress to people that may be directly life threatening and that may also lower resistance to infection. In general, disabling of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems is not a recommended measure to reduce the transmission of the virus.”

Professional review and plan

Given the risk of airborne transmission, it is important that buildings take proactive steps to mitigate transmission. These steps should be further categorized into short-term and long-term measures. Each building is unique, and strategies should be tailored to the specific building and HVAC conditions. As a first step, we recommend building owners and/or managers consult with a professional engineer and potentially an industrial hygienist to review existing building/HVAC conditions and to develop a plan. In many cases HVAC systems have fallen out of maintenance

and/or changes have been made to system operation. Typical findings include closed outdoor air dampers and failed exhaust dampers. The engineer’s initial study should identify these disparities and the requirements to resolve them. The next step is then to retro-commission the building to restore Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) to its initially designed level. Once this baseline is achieved, the plan can then focus on implementing short-term and long-term strategies to mitigate airborne transmission.

Airborne transmission starts with an infected individual. As the individual coughs, sneezes, sings, speaks, etc. they release small particles, or droplets, into the air. These droplets range in typical size from 0.3 to 10 microns and can float in the air for hours.

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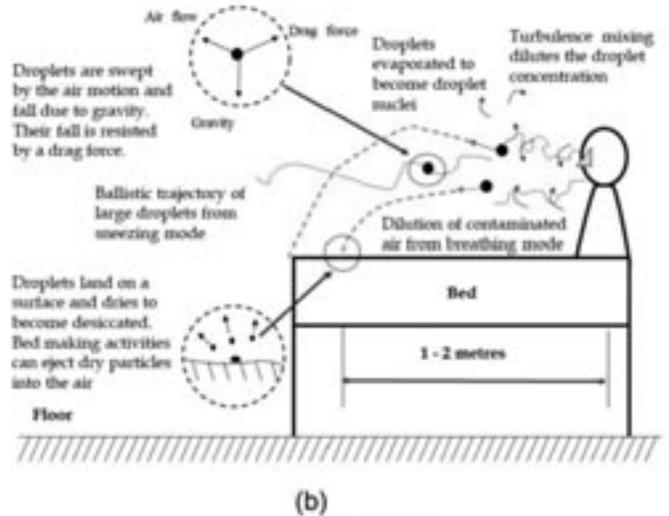
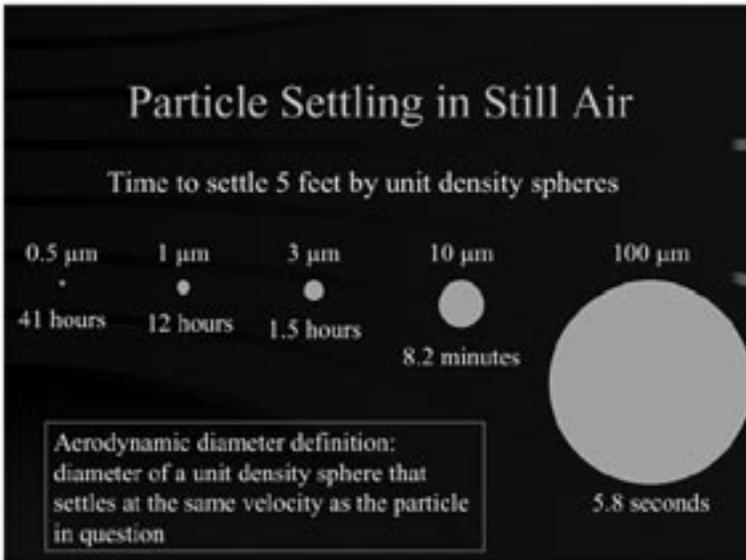
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These droplets are affected by air movement via HVAC systems and may be pulled into the return air stream and circulated to other spaces. Our recommended general strategy for reducing the quantity of

particles, and hence the risk of infection transmission via HVAC systems, is prioritized as follows:

From the ASHRAE Position Document on Infectious Aerosols:



a) Baron, P. n.d. *Generation and Behavior of Airborne Particles (Aerosols)*. Presentation published at CDC/NIOSH Topic Page: *Aerosols*, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Cincinnati, OH. www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/aerosols/pdfs/Aerosol_101.pdf.

b) theoretical aerobiology of transmission of droplets and small airborne particles produced by an infected patient with an acute infection (courtesy Yuguo Li).



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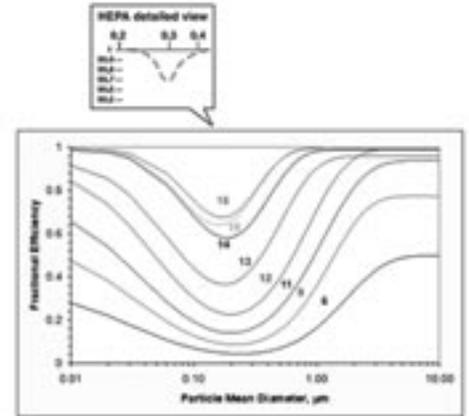
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Dilution: Increase the quantity of outdoor air or ventilation to a space.

This strategy can be approached several different ways, but the key is to increase the exhaust of droplets and replace them with fresh air. This is especially important in common area spaces such as lobbies, multipurpose rooms, and fitness rooms where higher occupancy occurs. Typical measures to accomplish this include opening outdoor air dampers,

increasing hours of operation for ventilation equipment, increasing exhaust, and modifying building automation controls. As described above, each measure should be tailored to the specific building/HVAC system and acceptable temperatures/humidity should always be maintained.



Filtration: Increase the filtration of air that is recirculated to the space.

Air that is not exhausted, is returned to the space. The next critical step is to increase filter effectiveness in an attempt to capture particulates/droplets before they can be recirculated. Typical filters installed in buildings have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 8 which results in a minimum efficiency of 20% for particles ranging from 1 to 3 microns in size and 70% for particles 3 to 10 microns in size. We recommend that filters be upgraded to MERV-13 at a minimum which has a minimum efficiency of 50% for 0.3 to 1 micron particles, 85% for 1 to 3 micron particles, and 90% for 3 to 10 micron particles. This increase in efficiency comes at an increase in airflow resistance which should be evaluated by an engineer to determine any effects on fan performance which may limit filtration options. Further, improved efficiency filters are typically larger than standard filters and may require existing equipment to be modified. In such cases, for high occupancy areas (lobbies, multipurpose rooms, fitness areas, etc.) we recommend that portable HEPA filters be placed in the spaces prior to and during central air handling unit upgrades. HEPA, or High Efficiency Particulate Air filters, are filters with MERV ratings above 16 and are very effective at removing small particles.

Source: ASHRAE

Ultraviolet Germicidal (UV-C): Install UV-C lights in equipment, ductwork or spaces.

Ultraviolet lights that emit light in the UV-C spectrum (around 254 nm) have been used to deactivate micro-organisms and viruses for decades. The installation of in-

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duct/air-handling unit and in-space UV systems should be considered in addition to the above strategies or if the above strategies are not feasible. Care must be taken to the design of UV systems so that virus deactivation rates are as high as reasonably possible and occupant/operator safety precautions are taken.

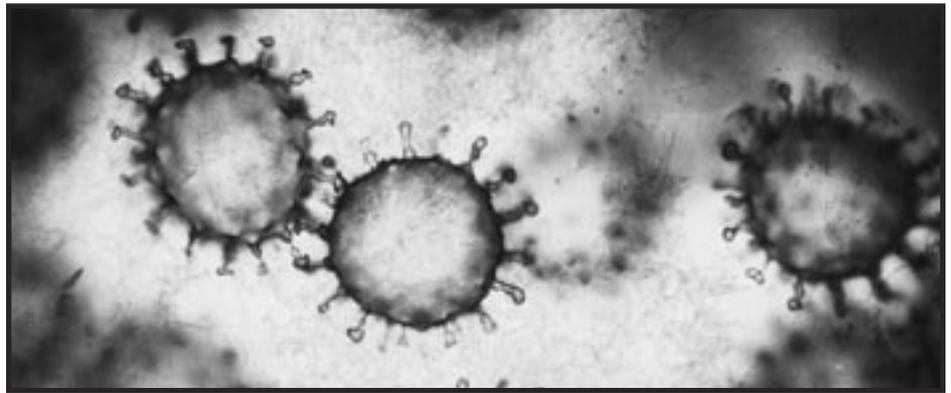
Other Air Cleaners: Evaluate air cleaning devices and their applicability.

With the current pandemic we have received numerous inquiries related to the effectiveness of various air cleaning devices. Technologies such as bi-polar ionization, Photocatalytic Oxidation (PCO), dry hydrogen peroxide, and others provide bold claims of virus mitigation and other air cleaning benefits. There is great variability among manufacturers and therefore, it is important to rigorously review product claims and their purported benefits while considering them for a building. Further, it is critical to evaluate any potential health hazards such as the generation of ozone. An engineering consultant should advise on standards and ratings that equipment should be labeled to and should guide the equipment evaluation. Air-cleaning devices should only be considered in addition to the above other strategies or if other strategies are not feasible.

Implement, measure and monitor

After identifying measures and selecting strategies, implementation can begin. Consideration should be given to measuring Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) metrics prior to implementation in order to set a baseline for comparison. After implementation, it is recommended that performance be continuously monitored and adjusted as necessary. Ongoing measurement of critical space IAQ metrics can be included as part of the design documentation to provide monitoring and reporting of certain performance metrics before and after implementation.

It is important to note that any HVAC measures implemented should be in addition to following all applicable CDC guidelines aimed at reducing viral transmission, including surface disinfection, social distancing, and wearing of masks. 🍃



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This year the spring season was again cool and wet and it stayed that way into June. The wet weather in May and June created scheduling challenges for exterior maintenance, improvement and restoration projects. Combined with delays and complications of getting work done during the Covid-19 pandemic, owners, managers and service providers of all types have been challenged like never before. The weather in July and August was favorable for outdoor work and has allowed many exterior projects to get back on track. Although the activities and damage related to social unrest and the derecho (storm) in mid-August distracted those directly impacted by these unforeseen challenges from their regular projects.

The hot and humid weather of the summer season can have a big impact on energy budgets and helps us to focus on the need for energy conservation practices and pursue the benefits of investing in new energy efficient equipment, products and technology. Our cover story for this issue of CBE profiles the 100 East Huron Condominium Association which has been very proactive in terms of energy efficiency and cost reduction. This article offers some lessons and notes from a cooling tower replacement project they completed successfully.

Covid-19 has impacted almost every aspect of our work and home life. We're all adjusting to the "New Normal" and trying to determine which of the new ways of doing things will remain once the pandemic is over. Our second story offers the perspective from several leading property managers of office and multifamily properties as well as some vendors that are providing key services of security and sanitization at numerous buildings. This edition also offers a separate article on virtual meetings.

We've been providing articles and resources related to indoor air quality for years and just like the virus has done in various other aspects of our lives, Covid-19 has caused many of us to become much more concerned and aware of the quality of the air we breathe. As a result, building owners, residents/tenants and managers have increased their interest in HVAC strategies and products aimed at reducing the airborne transmission of viruses. This issue features a very informative article on reducing viral transmissions in building air systems.

Two other articles that we hope are helpful in dealing with the pandemic include practical advice for safely operating indoor common area amenities in buildings and the impact of Covid-19 on property taxes and property values.

Our regular feature on the weather and your landscape also serves as our The Landscape Buyer column article in this issue. This article provides a recap of how the recent past weather is affecting your outdoor landscape and a forecast of general weather conditions for the coming seasons. We also have an article that explains Chicago's new building codes and what this change means for you.

We will continue to explore other relevant building management trends, challenges and initiatives in coming issues of CBE. If you have an idea or story to share please let us know.

Thanks to the many new subscribers that have found our publications useful and informative. Special thanks to the firms, organizations and groups that are Authorized Distributors of Chicagoland Buildings and Environments and Condo Lifestyles. Those of you who are interested in becoming subscribers can obtain subscription information on our website www.chicagolandbuildingsandenvironments.com

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by James A. Fizzell

The Weather and Your Landscape

Last winter our terrific weather prognosticator, Greg Soulje, predicted we would have a rather benevolent spring and summer with few extremes either in precipitation or temperatures. We have had many 90 degree days, but no prolonged heat waves. And, we have had some dry weather but no formal drought. Although August was very dry.

While the world seems to be in turmoil, overall it has been a nice spring and summer. As I write this article, we are having another spell of seasonally warm days and low humidity. Things are a bit dry, but if the local weather works are right, there will be showers very soon. With the strange situation due to the Covid-19 virus, and so many people stuck around home, the mild summer has stimulated a renewed interest in them getting outdoors and enjoying their landscapes and plantings. Garden centers and nurseries have reported the best year in memory. Increases in landscape construction and maintenance are reported. During our early morning walks, we see other walkers who have never done that before. They ask about the things that are growing, the flowers, the animals, and this past spring, the cicadas. Those of us who spend most of our days outdoors are well familiar with all these things and surprised that so many people consider them amazing. I suppose we should be amazed as well by the beauty of the things growing in our environments. Have we become jaded because we see them all the time? As a consulting horticulturist, I was trained to look for the things that are wrong with plants. A sage professor in my college days suggested, I take time every week to just go out and enjoy things, not to pay any attention to the bugs, the poor maintenance, the lousy designs, diseased leaves, dying trees, or whatever. As we walk, I have been trying to do just that. Not easy. The gorgeous weather this year has made getting out especially pleasant. And, while I have noticed many “problems” I’ve ceased trying to figure them out when just enjoying the outdoors.

Mostly Pleasant Weather this Year

This has been a mostly pleasant year in terms of weather. The winter was mild with no blizzards and no prolonged sub-zero periods. The last freeze occurred on May 11, and the last frost a few days later, near the full moon on May 7. Old time farmers here al-

ways considered the full moon in May as the indicator for the beginning of the frost-free season. Total snowfall was somewhat below average, about 30 inches, 36 or so being normal. The final snowfall was in the middle of April when a little more than 4 inches fell. Spring was seasonal, temperatures running below average early, but gradually increasing as the season progressed. It was wet, a repeat of the 2019 spring. Rain in excess of two feet fell from the beginning of April until mid-July when the rains suddenly ceased. From that time on, rainfall was of the pop-up variety, hitting some places, often excessively, while missing others completely. A derecho in mid-August caused tremendous damage in many places throughout the Midwest. By late August, as mentioned above, some places that missed the rains were getting pretty dry.

Plants Have Mostly Fared Well

Our plantings seemed to benefit from the benign weather too. Things did leaf out late, and some plants were more thinly foliated than expected. This was partially due to heavy seed loads that delayed leaves and put extra strain on the plants. Spring flowers were spectacular, and endured a lot longer than normal due to the cool weather. Fortunately, they avoided the spring storms that traditionally put an end to the blossoms.

More Rain Needed

Turfgrass greened up early, but conditions have been variously excellent to poor. Where limited to natural precipitation, with adequate rain grass remained green. The spotty nature of pop-up rain resulted in some areas that received little or no rain and the grass went dormant. Where grass went dormant, crabgrass quickly invaded. If crabgrass preventer was applied too early, it already had degraded allowing the weed to emerge.

Cicadas Present But Not Many Other Insects

Unexpected this season has been the near absence of some kinds of insects. However, in May, the early arrival of stragglers

from the Marlatt XIII Brood of 17-year periodical cicadas did cause a little excitement. The national media were reporting huge numbers of the insects, inferring that they were a nationwide phenomenon. Actually, the individuals emerging here were arriving four years early. The brood emerging in huge numbers and drawing the media’s attention was Marlatt Brood IX in the Eastern Ohio River Valley. The major emergence expected here is the Great Northern Illinois Brood XIII. Last seen in 2007, we can anticipate them in four years, 2024, and need to be forewarned to protect plants from the expected damage. Other than the cicadas, there were few bugs to contend with. In spite of the wet spring and early emergence, mosquitoes were rare in many parts of the area. Japanese beetles also were conspicuously absent. Other adult grubs, masked chaffers and June bugs, never arrived in any noticeable numbers. This may translate into reduced grub problems later. Even aphids, and mites, common in warm seasons, were scarce.

Chinch Bugs in Lawn

I visited with some of the landscape professionals to see what they were seeing. Most concur with that general assessment, and the lack of mosquitoes. A relatively new pest was discussed by our friend, Brian McGinty, McGinty Bros., Inc., who has been seeing high numbers of chinch bugs. These have been nearly unknown around here for decades. Lately, big populations have developed and are causing irregular dead spots in lawns throughout the area. Mild winters, and warm, dry summers are suspected as being responsible. Early treatment with insecticides is necessary. The lack of insects is a little curious after the mild winter. Some may have been infected by insect-pathogenic fungi in earlier wet weather. The coldest weather did occur with little if any snow cover and could have reduced grub populations. The more common dog day cicadas that arrive every year in late summer are emerging and their familiar singing has begun.

Maple Trees Having Troubles

As discussed in previous articles, trees continue to succumb to the weather-related problems of the past decade or so. Losses persist. Maples seem particularly hard hit. Be-

sides the weather problems, these trees have some other peculiarities that are affecting them. Maples are intolerant of deep planting. Also, they are susceptible to girdling roots, often due to improper planting. Deep planting results in collars of the trees being invaded by disease organisms that eventually girdle the plants.

Avoid Mulch Volcanoes

Mulch volcanoes around the trunks of trees are as damaging as deep planting. Both keep the collars of the plants wet so they deteriorate allowing girdling and organisms easy entrance. Wet weather exacerbates this problem.

Derecho Damaged Trees too

Many trees lost limbs and some were toppled in areas affected by the derecho, requiring massive clean-up operations and replacements. Some are still cleaning up from the damage caused by a number of tornadoes that spun out of this storm as well.

General Weather Forecast

To get a handle on expected weather for the next several months, we contacted our weather expert, Greg Soulje. Our weather is being dominated by a developing La Nina, Soulje says. He expects a mild-to-warm early fall, with just short-lived bursts of cooling. No early frost is expected with the first freeze about seasonal in timing. About Halloween (late October), a real roller coaster of temperatures will begin with pronounced cold in early November. Then after the first cold, expect a recovery at mid-month to seasonal or even warmer than average temperatures, plunging to colder than average over Thanksgiving.

Expect Cold Waves This Winter

Temperatures will trend to more seasonal in mid-December, Soulje thinks, then dive to colder, maybe even a cold wave, over the Holidays and into mid-January. Outside of a brief, late January thaw, he says, expect a cold remainder of winter, with seasonal to below temperatures, and several cold waves mid-to-late-season.

Precipitation Trends

As for moisture, expect little into early-to-mid-September before a bit more rainfall returns. "Matter of fact," says Soulje, it will be "No worse (or better) than seasonal rainfall," not a lot of help for dry soils. A more steady, regular moisture pattern returns by the second-half of October, into November and early December, probably more rain than ice

or snow, nonetheless providing a welcome soil moisture recharge. After a short break around mid-December, a very active stormy pattern will develop from mid-to-late-December into an early January and later into a stormy winter pattern. Expect frequent snow or mixed snow/rain progressing to snow systems here. Moisture (snow) continues near to slightly above-average, and ultimately to above-average total precipitation amounts. (rainfall/water-equivalent). Much of this total will be rainfall. A brief moderation or thaw begins late-January and extends into early February, with a return of the stormy pattern. There is No reason NOT to expect an extended winter cold and snow pattern well into March.

Prepare for Winter

Keeping this in mind, we need to prepare for a good, old-fashioned Chicagoland winter. With the prospect for an extended fall, there will be plenty of time for planting and for fall clean-up. But, that does not mean we can waste time. Winter weather will be here quicker than we prefer anyway. Pull out summer annuals as soon as they begin to deteriorate. Fall annuals, mums, kales, pansies, etc. should last into November, so get them planted early. Get the spring bulbs in as soon as they are available. Turf repairs should be made so the new grass has time to be established before freeze-up. When the fall perennials are done flowering, cut them back. Remove the debris to eliminate hiding places for small animals. If there is a lot of snow, rodent and deer damage can be expected. Begin to install guards and screens as soon as leaves start to fall. Mouse damage to tree trunks and shrubs can be minimized by creating a bare area around the plants so the mice have no place to make tunnels to the food source.

Mouse baits such as Gladiator (Bromethalin) are effective. They need to be in bait stations to prevent accidental poisoning of other animals. Set them out early, as soon as the grass begins to go dormant. Screens to protect lawns and especially evergreen shrubs need to be set up. Salt spray can do a lot of damage, so protect beds and lawns along the paved surfaces where salt will be applied. Evergreen shrubs and trees also can be burned by winter sun and wind. Wrap exposed plants with burlap to protect them.

Holiday Decorations

Neighborhood Holiday decorations will be especially important this year where people are stuck at home and cannot travel to enjoy them. Begin to install them as soon as most of the leaves are gone. The weather will be more favorable. It will be a lot easier for installers when they aren't freezing cold or hampered by snow. We try to begin when Halloween decorations are being taken down. The holiday ones don't need to be turned on until Thanksgiving.

Plan Snow Removal

Anticipating a lot of snow, it is a good plan to work with your snow removal professionals to make sure you are on the same page. Decide where the snow will be piled. If this decision is left up to the snow plow operator at 3:00 a.m. with blowing snow and temperatures below freezing, the snow will go wherever it is convenient for the operator. Also, decide how much snow will initiate plowing, and prioritize the places to be cleared. Finally, make an appointment with your landscape maintenance contractor to assess the past season and initiate plans for next year. These folks are professionals and are as interested as you are in making your grounds a place that you and they can be proud of. 🍃



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By Tammy Wendt, Candidate for Cook County Board of Review Commissioner, 1st District

Trying (and Taxing) Times: Property Values, Property Taxes, and COVID-19

These are difficult times, and the idiom that “drastic times often call for drastic measures” certainly justifies aggressive, proactive measures by the assessing authorities during this difficult and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic (“COVID-19”).

The impact of COVID-19 on commercial real estate values in Cook County is about to be tested in a multitude of ways, and each of the major commercial property sectors: lodging, retail, multi-family and office, are bound to face their own unique set of COVID-19 related challenges. The COVID-19’s impact on property performance will be easier to identify as rental revenue and occupancy rates drop, but the impact to property values will be much more difficult to measure and project.

Accordingly, to maintain fair and uniform values, assessing officials need to be vigilant in keeping up to date with regulatory and other market changes during this time. While each market is unique and will be impacted by COVID-19 differently, it is imperative that assessing officials stay up to date and well informed with the most current market data, and be willing to

make appropriate adjustments based upon the market and the constitutionally mandated guarantee of uniformity in taxation.

The first step requires recognition of the property types that are most adversely affected by COVID-19 and a specific plan or policy to deal with each type in the best interests (both short term and long term) of both the property owner and that of the taxpayers.

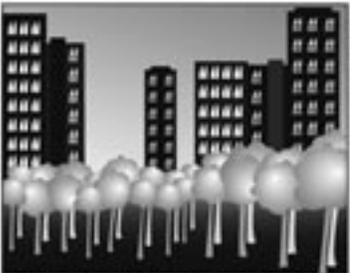
The property types most impacted by COVID-19 include:

Hospitality: These properties are amongst the hardest hit as occupancies have plummeted from stabilized rate of 70% to 80% down to single digits or been forced to closure. As we approach the 7th month of the pandemic, many of these properties are in danger of sliding into default and eventually being sold at significant losses. The hotel industry is on the

brink of collapse.

Retail: Many retail properties are similarly hard hit as they have reopened with limited hours and limited or restricted space for consumers, making it difficult to pay full rent and any expense contributions. The percentage of retail properties that were delinquent with their financing payments grew by more than 400% by the spring of 2020. It is expected to be up even more significantly by the 3rd quarter of 2020.

Multifamily: Owners of these properties have a difficult quandary. Forbearance programs offered by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac give the owners a “lifeline” in the form of 90-120 day forbearance of mortgage payments, but if they opt into those agreements, they are prohibited from evicting tenants for non-payment of rent. Additionally, as reserve requirements are increased, borrowers’ effective purchasing power is reduced, eventually resulting in lower purchase prices. As unemployment rates continue to rise delinquent rents will rise accordingly.



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Impact of the Covid-19 Disaster Declaration

Office: Even before the pandemic, office properties were being forced to make adjustments to accommodate tenants whose workforce was increasingly desirous of working remotely (from home), and minimizing or offering credits for space formerly used for file storage as newer technology allowed tenants to be “paperless”. As so many tenants downsize or ask for concessions or other accommodations, rents are likely to be adjusted downward and vacancies are almost certainly expected to increase, further reducing office property values.

But it is equally important for taxpayers to know of the remedies available:

Despite the bleak outlook for these properties, the Illinois Property Tax Code provides a means by which the assessments on these properties can be adjusted and corrected to reflect the current market. Section 35 ILCS 200/13-5 of the Code requires that there shall be a re-assessment of any taxable property that was declared a major disaster area by the President of the United States or the Governor of the State of Illinois. Further, the Code provides that the reassessment reflect the value of the property as of the date of the declaration of the county as a major disaster area.

That declaration was made when Governor Pritzker designated ALL counties in the State of Illinois

as disaster areas on March 9, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The force of the declaration meant that ALL properties in the State of Illinois should be reassessed in 2020 using the valuation date of March 9, 2020, which necessitates downward adjustments to account for the pandemic’s negative impact on real estate values after the original valuation date of January 1st.

It is noteworthy that while Cook County properties are typically reassessed in a triennial system (every three years), this statute mandates that all properties in the state are entitled to a revaluation in 2020, including all the north suburban Cook County properties that were just recently assessed in 2019.

Yet in response to the pandemic and despite the looming threat of businesses being forced to locate out of Cook County, Cook County assessing officials have not complied with even the most widely accepted methods of property valuation that clearly support reductions here and now. While some small adjustments were made, they were neither compliant with any widely accepted methods of valuation, nor were they uniform in their application.

Insufficient Response to Covid-19 from Assessing Officials

Unfortunately, thus far, the response from local assessing officials in dealing with COVID-19 and the legal remedies available to them has been under-

whelming and grossly insufficient. There have been small adjustments made when large adjustments would have been justified, and many requests for vacancy relief are typically ignored or denied except in the most extenuating circumstances. And at a time when so many substantial properties are vacant or operating at a loss, denying vacancy relief to distressed properties will likely be the death knell for many local businesses as local tax rates soar.

Fortunately for local taxpayers the Cook County Assessor does not have the final word on assessed values before they are certified. Per the Illinois Property Tax Code, the Cook County Board of Review (the “Board”) is empowered to review the assessments of all properties that are contested as being excessive or in violation of the state’s mandate of uniformity in taxation, which provides one last chance for taxpayers to avoid the potentially catastrophic impact facing the commercial real estate sector.

In making its decisions, the Board will have the benefit of more data (rental income and vacancy history) and therefore more to analyze, as COVID-19 plays out into the 4th quarter of 2020. Hopefully, the Board will take advantage of the extra time, and additional knowledge and information, thereby helping to ease or avert this disaster looming on the horizon. The taxpayers of Cook County deserve a new, fair review of their property values. 🍃

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by Janelle Dixon – Kovitz Shifrin Nesbit

4 Benefits of Virtual Meetings

Condominium, homeowners, and townhome community associations typically schedule in-person meetings to address association business. However, board members and property managers have begun utilizing tele-conferencing technology to conduct virtual meetings. All types of business people and organizations are taking advantage of the benefits of virtual meetings as well.

While there may be some initial resistance to virtual meetings, it's hard to overlook the accessibility, affordability, and convenience of tele-conferencing technology. Video and audio-conferencing software such as Skype and Zoom can be a great tool for simulating face-to-face interactions while honoring the board of directors' duty to permit owners to attend open portions of meetings.

Below are four benefits to holding virtual meetings:

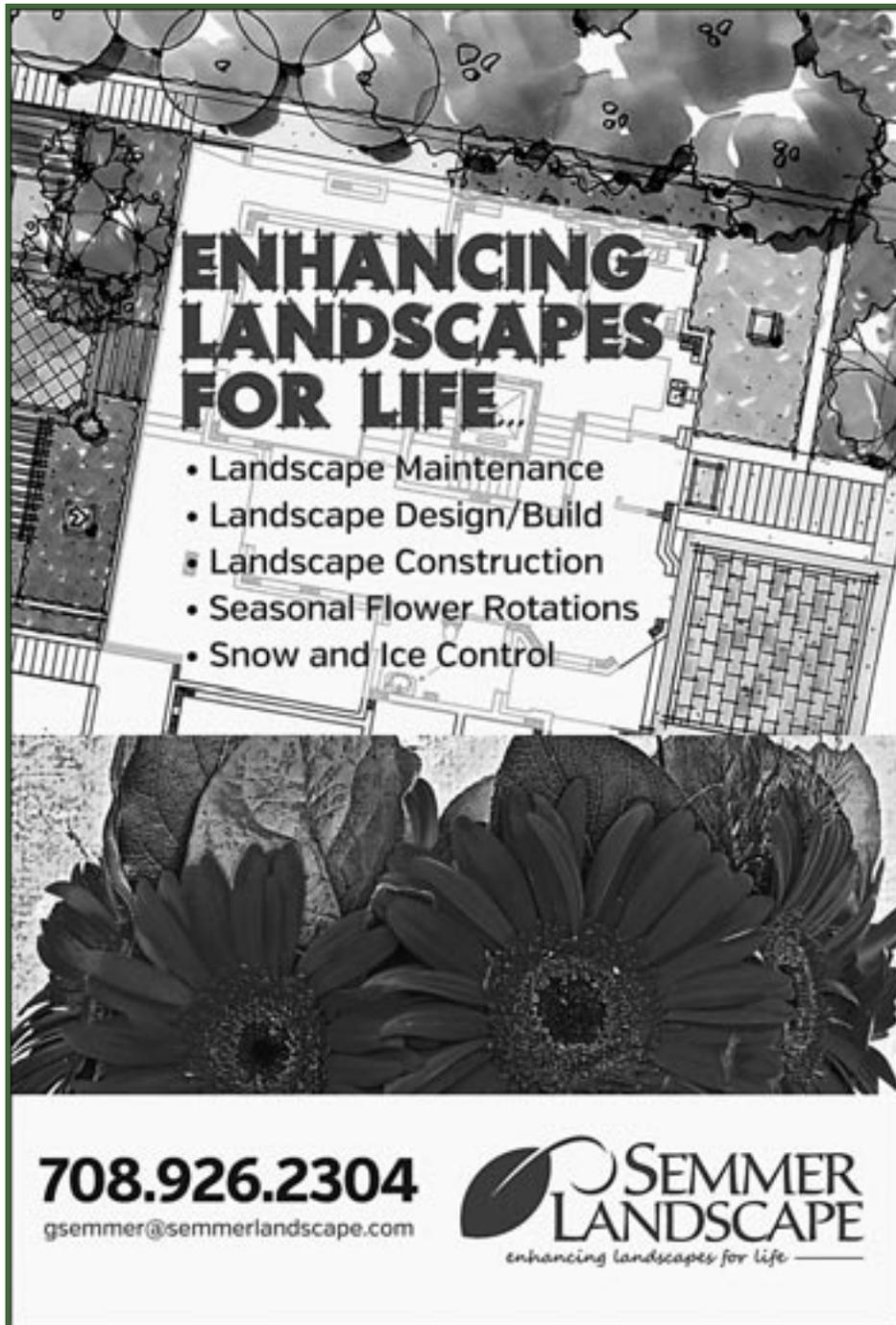
1. Accessibility

The cost of video conferencing software is minimal, and in some cases free. Most participants including companies, employees, community association board members, tenants and unit owners will most likely already own a smartphone or computer they can use to access applications like Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, Cisco Webex, or Microsoft Teams.

Many video conferencing software options have both video and audio features. While a live video feed is the best way to simulate face-to-face conversation, it's important to have an audio-only option available in the event a participant's internet connection is not reliable enough to support video. Generally, it's a good practice to include a dial-in number with the meeting invitation to ensure access.

2. Participation

Virtual meetings can encourage participation from participants including those who have multiple dwellings or are traveling out of state or have scheduling conflicts due to work obligations and other activities.



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3. Convenience

Virtual meetings can be very convenient for everyone involved. The meeting organizer can easily send out an email invite with the agenda and a link to the meeting to all participants. This prevents the need to print fliers or post signs to promote the meeting.

Since video conferencing software also allows for screen sharing, it can also save money on printing costs if you typically distribute printed agendas or other presentation materials.

4. Structure

Organizers can structure a virtual meeting in the same way they would an in-person meeting. A virtual meeting can follow the same rules, ethics, and customs. They can still follow an agenda in an effort to move business along and maintain order.

Additionally, hosts such as a community association board, office building or other organization can ask participants to submit questions before the meeting. This allows those hosting the meeting to prepare in advance and adequately address any issues and concerns.

In the case of a community association, the association's governing documents should serve as the ultimate guide on how to handle meetings. Board members should consult with the association's counsel before adjusting the design of your meetings for virtual purposes. When done the right way, meeting virtually has the ability to feel just as natural as if you were meeting in person. 🍃



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By Jason Wilen, AIA CDT RRO - Klein & Hoffman

CHICAGO'S NEW BUILDING CODES - What This Change Means for You

In April of 2019, the Chicago City Council adopted the Construction Code Modernization ordinance. This step was an important part of a multi-year effort that began in 2015 to re-align Chicago's building codes with widely used model construction codes while also maintaining longstanding Chicago-based requirements.

This challenging task has resulted in a family of documents known as the 2019 Chicago Construction Codes. In June of 2019 new energy conservation code provisions became effective and on August 1 of this year the new building and building rehabilitation provisions became mandatory. While major new provisions related to fire prevention and plumbing are still being worked out, the sections that have already come on-line represent the most significant change to the rules for building and rehabilitating large residential and commercial buildings in seventy years.

Why is Chicago changing its building codes?

Most jurisdictions in the U.S. have building codes based on the International Codes, often referred to as the "I-Codes". Chicago, until now, has been a notable exception. The I-Codes are developed by The Washington D.C.-based International Code Council (ICC) through a governmental consensus process that provides for input from multiple stakeholders and members of the public. According to the ICC, "The I-Codes are the most widely accepted, comprehensive set of model codes used in the U.S. The family of fifteen coordinated, modern building

safety codes help ensure the engineering of safe, sustainable, affordable, and resilient structures." By adopting I-Codes-based provisions, Chicago takes advantage of ICC's robust code legacy and process and aligns itself with construction practices common in large jurisdictions throughout the rest of the country.

Why should you care about the new code?

Building codes are regulations that establish the minimum requirements for the construction of buildings—new construction, restoration, and repairs and generally related to the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants. In some instances, the new code requirements are more stringent than the ones they replace. In other words, architects, engineers, and contractors have a new set of minimum requirements that must be met when building and

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maintaining buildings and some rules raise the bar compared to past requirements.

There are many ways these new regulations may affect building owners and managers. As an example, consider roof replacement. All buildings, from time to time, will need a new roof and such projects often represent one of the largest capital expenditures faced by owners. Beginning August 1, 2020, new code provisions related to roof replacement became mandatory. Minimum requirements for wind uplift resistance of roof membranes and edge metal; vegetative (green) roofing; ballasted roofs; and occupiable rooftops (i.e., rooftop terraces, amenity spaces, etc.) all become more stringent compared to past codes. There ideally, with increased stringency comes greater safety and resiliency but sometimes also higher costs.

Considerations for Building Owners and Managers

When planning for construction or restoration projects, consider:

- Budgetary estimates for building improvements established prior to the new code may need to be revised to ensure new, more stringent requirements are considered as part of project requirements.

Chicago's building code and fire code reflect nearly 150 years of wisdom about how to build well and how to build safely in a dense urban environment. Construction requirements, however, must reflect not only the lessons of the past but also provide a framework for the future. The City of Chicago is in the middle of a multi-year effort to realign Chicago's construction codes, based on widely-used model construction codes, while maintaining longstanding requirements that are well-adapted to local conditions. The current effort began in 2015 and is planned for completion in 2021.

Phase 1: Electrical Code and Conveyance Device Code

Phase 2: Administrative Provisions, Building Code, Rehabilitation Code, and Minimum Requirements for Existing Buildings
(Transition to the 2019 Chicago Construction Codes - Permit Applications Started on or After August 2, 2020).

Phase 3: Fire Code (Hazardous Occupancies), Mechanical Code, Plumbing Code, and other provisions

Learn more about Chicago's code modernization effort at: https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/bldgs/supp_info/CodeModernization.html

- Ensure design professionals, contractors, consultants, and vendors hired to advise and conduct construction projects for your organization are up-to-speed with new code provisions and understand how to comply.
- Understand that, as with any new code adoption, the Chicago Department of Buildings will need some time to develop interpretations of code provisions. In the short term there may be some uncertainty as to how some provisions will be interpreted and enforced.

Final thoughts

There is a misconception sometimes stated

that building "to code" is a luxury or something that is only done if you have the money. The reality is the building code represents the minimum requirements and provisions are established to balance safety, sustainability, affordability, and resiliency all at the same time. There are numerous exceptions written into the code that often allow for modifications to requirements in situations where full compliance is infeasible. Working with knowledgeable design professionals and contractors helps ensure you get good value for your money while also taking advantage of the protections established within the code. 🍃



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By Howard S. Dakoff, Esq. and Adam T. Kahn, Esq. - Levenfeld Pearlstein, LLC

Practical Advice for Safely and Effectively Operating Indoor Common Area Amenities

As summer transitions to fall and the temperature drops, the demand for indoor common areas in community association is likely to increase. Many community associations continue to grapple with the issue of whether and how to safely reopen their indoor common amenities such as fitness centers, pools and hospitality rooms during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

While associations are not prohibited from reopening, many will refrain from doing so given the potential health and liability risks, while other associations are reopening their amenities with thorough social distancing and sanitizing protocols.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued guidance for certain amenities such as swimming facilities. Further, municipalities,

like the City of Chicago, have published recommended guidelines for residential buildings and amenities such as fitness centers and swimming facilities. It should be noted that State and Municipal guidelines have been changing regularly and community associations should periodically affirm compliance with the most current guidelines.

All applicable guidelines should be fol-

lowed to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community as well as mitigate potential liability by following governmental guidelines. The association's insurance carrier should also be consulted before reopening indoor common amenities to determine whether insurance coverage is available for issues related to COVID-19 exposure and to help the board make an informed decision on reopening indoor amenities.

In addition, below is a list of practical considerations for community association boards to consider in deciding whether and how to reopen indoor common amenities:



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1. Create a Social Distancing Plan.

- » Limit the number of persons in the space at a time to ensure compliance with applicable state and local guidelines.
- » Implement a virtual “sign in”/reservation system to fairly, safely, and effectively manage the traffic flow for the amenity area.

2. Prepare the Space.

- » Implement an adequate cleaning regimen in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- » Make sure that appropriate cleaning and disinfecting supplies are available.
- » Add markers to delineate a safe distance (similar to what is done in grocery stores).
- » Re-arrange and remove furniture and equipment to avoid overcrowding.
- » Provide hand sanitizer and appropriate disinfecting wipes.



3. Update Procedures/Protocols.

- » Evaluate current policies, procedures and protocols for ways to safely relax restrictions and update accordingly.

Note: Policies may be adopted or modified by board vote; new or modified rules require the formal rule adoption process.

- » Determine whether to allow non-residents in the space (many associations are temporarily limiting access to common element amenities to residents only)
- » Monitor applicable CDC, state and local guidelines to ensure compliance with the most up-to-date directives.



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- » Obtain appropriate personal protective equipment for staff members (if any).
- » Factor cost of additional cleaning/sanitizing (staffing, supplies, etc.) into the budget.

4. Hash Out a Contingency Plan if a Resident (or Staff Member) Tests Positive.

- » If practicable, keep a record of those who use the space for contact tracing purposes.
- » Consider closing the space for an appropriate period in the event of a positive test and thoroughly and adequately clean and disinfect the space before reopening.
- » Make alternative arrangements in the event of a staffing shortage.

5. Communicate with Residents and Staff.

- » Advise residents and staff (if any) of any new or modified procedures and protocols.
- » Post CDC, state and local guidance, Association policies, and reminders as needed.



1. Create a Social Distancing Plan.
2. Prepare the Space.
3. Update Procedures/Protocols.
4. Hash Out a Contingency Plan if a Resident (or Staff Member) Tests Positive.
5. Communicate with Residents and Staff.

Note: be sure to consult with the Association's insurance carrier regarding coverage and posting signs;

- » Consider feedback from residents and revise policies, procedures, and protocols as appropriate.

The above list is not exhaustive, but is instead intended as a starting point for helping the Board discuss reopening and safely maintaining indoor common area amenities. Note: The Coronavirus pandemic is a “moving target”, and federal, state and local guidance continues to evolve. The above is based on the current guidance and is subject to change.

It is understandable that residents are eager to use their association's indoor common amenities; however, Boards should thoughtfully consider exactly when and how to do so and have a plan in place to protect the health and safety of the community. Ultimately, each association will need to determine whether (and under what protocols) they are comfortable reopening indoor common amenities, as health and safety come first. 🍃



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