How utilities can best help customers navigate the National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

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On March 2, 2022, the US government released its National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan to give Americans a path forward as we learn how to live with the COVID-19 virus and its variants. The plan focuses on four key goals:

- Protect against and treat COVID-19
- Prepare for new variants
- Prevent economic and educational shutdowns
- Continue to vaccinate the world

One of the ways the Biden administration hopes to keep businesses and schools open is to give them the tools they need to improve ventilation and air filtration. According to the plan:

> The U.S. government will…provide a Clean Air in Buildings checklist that all buildings can use to improve indoor ventilation and air filtration and will encourage uptake of ventilation improvements. The Administration will also provide technical assistance that encourages schools, public buildings, and state, local, and Tribal governments to make ventilation improvements and upgrades using American Rescue Plan funds.

As mask mandates lift across the country, millions of Americans are either gleefully or grudgingly taking their exposed faces into schools, offices, stores, restaurants, and gyms, assuming the businesses have taken appropriate measures to ensure their safety. With the government funding ventilation upgrades, there's really no reason why businesses shouldn't start planning their HVAC improvements as soon as possible.

With building safety during COVID, start small for big gains

If you're struggling with where to begin, E Source can help. We can provide the air quality information

your utility's business customers need to make their buildings as safe as possible for occupants while simultaneously saving money on their energy bills.

Our article "Air Quality, Energy Savings, and COVID-19" appears in E Source Business Energy Advisor, a library of information on energy efficiency in commercial and industrial facilities that utilities can publish on their websites. Business Energy Advisor offers nearly 100 pages of customer-centric guidance around energy-efficient technologies; best-practice information custom tailored to a wide range of business types; and data analysis to help users make the best decisions when considering new types of equipment.

The article includes detailed advice for businesses looking to reduce the airborne transmission of COVID-19 in their facilities. Rather than jumping into costly upgrades to HVAC systems, businesses should start with simpler solutions to keep their buildings safe without sacrificing energy savings. Some of the simpler solutions include:

Help your business customers get a head start on the National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

Learn more about Business Energy Advisor and contact our team today to start a conversation about how to give your customers access:

- Installing low-pressure-drop Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) 13 filters
- Using natural ventilation
- Adding or using economizers for air-conditioning
- Adjusting, rather than disabling, demand-controlled ventilation
- Tuning up the air-conditioning system
- Using energy management and information systems
- Performing commissioning on the building's systems
- Adding energy-recovery ventilation
- Monitoring indoor air quality
- Using ultraviolet technology to sanitize air in ducts

Members of the E Source Business Marketing Service can get more tips in our report Help your business customers manage energy use as they reopen after COVID-19 closures. Take advantage of our building-restart checklist included within to guide business customers through an end-to-end assessment of their main energy systems so they better understand their current state. As the US government releases its new Clean Air in Buildings checklist, we'll be sure to update these resources accordingly.

Utilities are trusted advisers in trying times

For utility members who have integrated their customized version of Business Energy Advisor with their website, sharing the "Air Quality, Energy Savings, and COVID-19" page with customers will help position your utility as a trusted energy adviser when many schools, business owners, and facility managers are overwhelmed by the challenges of keeping their occupants and customers safe during

and after the pandemic.

You can also be proactive in engaging these business customers with the relevant energy-efficient technology solutions and working with them to make sure they have access to any government incentives or assistance to address any financial barriers to making these investments.

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