



Wisconsin Elections Commission

212 East Washington Avenue | Third Floor | P.O. Box 7984 | Madison, WI 53707-7984
(608) 266-8005 | elections@wi.gov | elections.wi.gov

DATE: March 22, 2020

TO: Wisconsin Municipal Clerks
Wisconsin County Clerks
City of Milwaukee Election Commission
Milwaukee County Election Commission

FROM: Meagan Wolfe
Administrator

SUBJECT: FAQ: Hand Sanitizer Issues and Options

The Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) has received numerous questions regarding the availability of hand sanitizer and other cleaning products necessary for the safe administration of in-person absentee and polling place voting. We also understand that vendors around the state have exhausted their supply of hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and other cleaners that can be used for sanitization of both hands and surfaces.

The WEC is currently looking for options to find additional supplies that clerks can use, in the meantime, there are other options you can pursue on the local level to ensure you, your staff and election workers can practice recommended hand hygiene. We encourage you to continue to pursue those options and not rely on potential resources from the WEC or other state agencies. WEC will continue to aggressively pursue options available through the state but have also been told supplies have been exhausted.

The below information contains more details about recommended options and sanitation supplies you may be able to source in local stores. If your municipality purchases sanitation supplies, we ask that you maintain receipts and document need. There is the potential that these costs could be reimbursed using federal funds after election day.

1. Washing with Soap and Water

The CDC still recommends washing your hands with soap and water as the best way to keep your hands clean and prevent the spread of COVID-19. If the facility you are using for in-person absentee voting, in-person registration, or for election day voting has access to soap and water, and it is practical, you should direct voters to that option. If soap and water are available, allowing poll workers and election officials regular opportunities for breaks to wash their hands is recommended.

2. Portable Hand Washing Stations

Portable hand washing stations are an option for in-person absentee and polling place sites that either lack adequate or need additional hand washing opportunities. Soap and water are effective and recommended hand washing measures to combat the spread of COVID-19. Portable hand washing stations can be placed near the entrance or exit of a location to provide voters with the chance to wash up before and after voting. These

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Meagan Wolfe

stations are usually available from event or construction rental companies. There are also stations that can be purchased through outdoor supply companies, etc. The vendors we have spoken with recommend that at least one hand wash station be used per 1,000 people.

3. Options to Create Your Own Sanitizer

It may be possible to create your own sanitizer that can be used on hands and surfaces, but there is no standard federal guidance for this process. In order to be effective against COVID-19, any cleaning substance must contain at least 60%+ ethanol or 70%+ isopropyl. These percentages must be considered when you are using any additives, such as aloe gel or essential oils, that will dilute the alcohol below the threshold for effectiveness. Contact your local health department for guidance on you to create sanitizer that will be effective if you wish to pursue this option. In your local areas, if you do not have access to prepared gel sanitizer or wipes, you may look for 70%+ isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol in the first aid aisle) or 60%+ ethanol alcohol (120+ proof grain alcohol found in the liquor department). Again, these products can be put into clean spray bottles and used as hand sanitizer or surface sanitizer.

4. Surface Cleaners/ Voting Equipment and Screen Cleaner

For surfaces, like desks and tables, the CDC recommends that other surface cleaners can also be used to remove debris and germs through the act of scrubbing. If you have other surface cleaners, even if they do not have the alcohol contents listed below, using them to scrub surfaces regularly is still effective. Manufacturer's also recommend isopropyl based cleaners for voting equipment and other screens. Computer screens and keyboards can also be cleaned with isopropyl based cleaners. You may find screen cleaning products and swabs with 70% isopropyl make up in electronics departments, or in the first aid aisles (small 70% isopropyl swabs used prior to medical injections, etc.).

5. Consult with County and Local Health Departments

Consult with you county or local health departments, when possible, to discuss with them your needs for supplies and guidance. Clerks have reported receiving varying levels of support from their local health departments, so this may not be an option for all clerks. They may not currently be able to provide supplies, such as hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, but they can assist with identifying alternative options that may be available to you. It is also important that you make your local health departments aware of the needs of election officials so that your needs are considered when the health department is allocating the supplies they may gain access to in the coming days.

6. Potential Availability of Sanitizer from WEC

The WEC is working to acquire a large quantity of a 70% ethyl alcohol liquid sanitizing product. We are attempting to make this purchase in bulk, so we may still need your help with finding spray bottles needed to dispense the sanitizer. We have also been told that there is a lack of spray bottles for purchase in the supply chain. We ask that in anticipation for this potential purchase, you look for spray bottles that can be used. You may have empty spray bottles around your office or home from non-caustic cleaners such as window cleaner. These bottles can be cleaned and then used with sanitizing liquid. Spray bottle can be of various sizes and must be able to dispense liquid, as opposed to gel-based dispensers. The WEC will coordinate distribution of any available supplies through the county clerks so please contact your county to inform them if you are concerned about having the recommended sanitation supplies to conduct in-person registration/absentee or for election day and ballot processing.

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Please contact us with any questions or concerns that you may have at elections@wi.gov or (608) 261-2028.