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Technical Document #44

Compilation of Guidance When Handling Customer Clothing and Other Soft Goods Potentially Contaminated with COVID-19

We are studying all available information on how to handle clothing, bedding, household items, stuffed animals, etc. which may also be contaminated by COVID-19. All sources are recommending, at minimum, that you use disposable gloves. Before using the gloves, you should first wash your hands with warm water and antimicrobial soap for at least 20 seconds. The gloves should be discarded as soon as you have finished working with clothing followed by a vigorous hand wash with warm water and soap, again for at least 20 seconds. Never use the gloves for other activities after handling potentially contaminated clothing.

Hospitals, Water Sanitation workers, and Health Care Providers have more rigorous standards for PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) when dealing with soiled linens and clothing from people infected with COVID-19, and you can read more about that level of protection here:

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>

Fortunately, it is being reported that COVID-19 does not live long outside of a human host, in most cases only 20 minutes but it could be hours or a couple of days if found on hard surfaces such as metal.

In terms of caring for laundry, the risk of transmission to a laundry worker is considered extremely low. The most aggressive source we can find suggests using not only the gloves but also an FFP2 face mask.

No masks available? No problem. It has been suggested that since the virus cannot live longer than three days outside of the human body, in the very worst case scenario, you could take in customer orders, delivered to you in sealed plastic bags, and date each bag as they come in. Wait five days (for extra security) from the drop-off day and then process the order using the gloves and normal hygiene precautions.

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All sources are suggesting that normal laundry washing with water of 140F / 60C with normal laundry detergent is sufficient to deactivate the coronavirus.

Why does this work? The coronavirus has a fatty, or lipid, structure surrounded by proteins. This lipid structure is the “sphere” you see in depictions of the virus. Laundry detergent contains hydrophobic elements that penetrate that lipid structure and act as a crowbar to break the virus and disperse it.

It is also suggested that the virus is very heat-sensitive, meaning the temperatures achieved in a GreenEarth Dry Cleaning process should also aid in deactivation.

Read more about safe handling precautions here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html>

<http://cinet.activehosted.com/index.php?action=social&chash=96da2f590cd7246bbde0051047b0d6f7.229&s=fb42adbb72fd3b3597a2fe5aadaa0e70>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/12/science-soap-kills-coronavirus-alcohol-based-disinfectants>

<https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1272288/retrieve>

As always, if you have any questions, email us at technical@greenearthcleaning.com

Or, give us a call at 877-926-0895.