**Preparation for Entering the Next Pandemic with Copper and other Automatic Door Solutions**

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The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has made the world wary of everything we touch. As school districts reopen, faculty, parents and students want to know how schools are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for and prevent the next one. With treatment of COVID-19 costing an estimated $20,000 per person, it is critical for public spaces to implement solutions to prevent escalating virus spread as they re-open in the new normal[[1]](#footnote-2). Some of the most important places to keep clean are high-touch surfaces such as door handles and push plates, which can transfer diseases between people as they enter a facility. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), current evidence suggests SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, remains viable for hours to days on various materials. Therefore, they recommend cleaning visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection as a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses.[[2]](#footnote-3)

While staff wear face masks, implement social distancing and increase cleaning practices; facility managers and school leadership can also equip their facilities with enhanced germ protection from the moment students enter the building. By installing touchless sensors and copper-coated automatic door switches that kill bacteria and viruses on contact, school leaders can help limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce potential exposure to other illnesses.

**The Cost of COVID-19**

As of February 19, 2021, over 111 million cases of coronavirus have been confirmed worldwide with over 2.47 million fatalities[[3]](#footnote-4). The U.S. alone is approaching 28 million confirmed cases with over 500,000 deaths recorded so far1. While the true death rate is unknown, recent studies estimate it to be 3.1%, compared to the seasonal flu at 0.1%3.

The economic impact is also uncertain. A report released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimates that the global economy could suffer between $5.8 trillion and $8.8 trillion in losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic[[4]](#footnote-5).

**Disease Spread on Surfaces**

SARS-CoV-2 is especially dangerous because it can last longer on surfaces than other viruses. according to a study from the New England Journal of Medicine, the SARS-CoV-2 virus lasted up-to 72 hours on stainless steel and plastic[[5]](#footnote-6).

Surfaces handled frequently throughout the day by numerous people, including doorknobs, automatic door push plates, light switches and more, require more attention from cleaning professionals since they can disperse germs quickly even with routine cleaning. If infectious diseases are present on entrances, they can spread to everyone who enters the building and potentially contaminate the entire interior. Therefore, facility managers and school leadership need solutions that prevent the spread of pathogens at its entrances.

**Implementing Protective Measures**

It’s crucial for facility managers and school leadership to implement solutions that protect faculty and students from this and future outbreaks. In addition to effective cleaning and disinfecting regimens, they can also consider installing unique solutions that reduce and even kill diseases spread on high-touch surfaces. Here are some products to consider for protecting students and visitors:

* Copper: Copper and copper alloys have been used in thousands of products, from antiquity to the 21st century, all around the world[[6]](#footnote-7). Copper and copper-based alloys have antimicrobial properties and it is therefore highly effective in killing a broad range of bacteria and fungi, and viruses. Additionally, the New England Journal of Medicine said that on copper, no viable SARS-CoV-2 was measured after 4 hours and no viable SARS-CoV-1 was measured after 8 hours6. In 2017, Pullman Regional Hospital in Pullman, ![A close up of a device

  Description automatically generated]()Wash. installed 22 Larco® Coppershield® automatic push plate switches to further supplement its current infection control program because of its inherent ability to kill bacteria that cause these infections[[7]](#footnote-8). According to Ed Harrich, Director of Surgical Services at Pullman Regional Hospital, the Coppershield push plates provide peace of mind because they are silently working to mitigate infections. Coppershield push plates are designed with an antimicrobial copper surface material which is registered by the EPA to kill more than 99.9% of bacteria within two hours.
* A picture containing sitting, monitor, lotion, white

  Description automatically generatedTouchless interface: We’re now living in a world where touch could be hazardous to our health. A recent study found that touching door handles topped the list of things respondents believed would increase their likelihood to contract coronavirus[[8]](#footnote-9). Touchless automatic solutions eliminate the worry of spreading germs through door handles or lighting controls in any facility. Implementing touchless operators like Larco® U-WAV switches can protect visitors with the simple wave of a hand while saving time and cost on cleaning.
* ![A close up of a device

  Description automatically generated]()Alternative automatic switches: Traditional automatic door actuators can be inconvenient for not only wheelchair users, but also for those who have their hands full with coffee or paperwork, or even parents pushing a stroller. Automatic door push plates are available in easy-to-reach forms where customers can avoid using their hands. Larco® HandiTap wall switch allows for activation at any approach or height level, assisting those in wheelchairs, using crutches or carrying heavy loads[[9]](#footnote-10).

**Proactive Infection Prevention**

High-touch surfaces like door handles pose a risk of transmission of not only SARS CoV 2, but other bacteria and illnesses as well. Leadership must make a long-term commitment to the health and safety of building occupants by implementing solutions that prevent and kill bacteria and virus spread. Although prioritizing cleaning is critical for preventing pathogen spread during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, facility managers and leadership can implement proactive solutions to help kill bacteria. Automatic door switches are some of the simplest and most effective way to pandemic-proof your facility.

*Larco is an ATEK Access Technologies brand and leader in access technologies for public entrances. Larco has been manufacturing rugged and reliable push plate switches and other automatic door products in the USA for over 60 years. ATEK Access Technologies, LLC is a part of the ATEK Companies group of technology and manufacturing businesses. For more information about Larco products, visit* [*www.larco.com*](http://www.larco.com)*.*

1. <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/potential-costs-of-coronavirus-treatment-for-people-with-employer-coverage/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.adb.org/news/covid-19-economic-impact-could-reach-8-8-trillion-globally-new-adb-report> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.copper.org/education/history/timeline/timeline.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.larco.com/news/new-larco-coppershield-push-plate-fights-bacteria-that-cause-hospital-acqui> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://mcusercontent.com/45027c46b385d9b28f2d3a6d7/files/7d9ee875-aeea-432f-a268-13e68ed2494b/Datassential_Coronavirus_3_12_20.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.larco.com/news/larco-handitap-wall-switch-opens-the-doors-to-total-access> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)