

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

(Revised 4/18/2022)

[Administrative Code - Cleaning Standards and Health Information Protocols for Single Room Occupancy Hotels]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to update protections for occupants of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels by replacing hotel operators' responsibility to clean common areas after a COVID-19 outbreak with a new minimum cleaning standard and upon request, requiring SRO hotel operators to provide contact tracing information related to any infectious or contagious disease; during the COVID-19 pandemic, to require the Department of Public Health (DPH) to maintain a telephone hotline to respond to questions from SRO residents regarding isolation and quarantine, testing, and other COVID-19 related matters; and to update COVID-19 regulations by removing outdated provisions including those related to notice of and access to isolation and quarantine hotels, DPH responsibilities to post in SRO hotels information related to isolation and quarantine, and DPH responsibilities to maintain public facing data relating to COVID-19 cases in SRO Hotels.

Existing Law

The current ordinance, codified at Chapter 41G of the Administrative Code, establishes City policy to place SRO residents who tested positive for or were exposed to a person with COVID-19 in isolation and quarantine hotels, and to provide transportation, three meals per day, adequate heat, and clean restroom facilities at the hotels.

If a single case of COVID-19 occurs in an SRO hotel, the current ordinance requires DPH to post a notice of SRO residents' rights under the ordinance to isolation and quarantine hotels and testing resources, order hotel owners or operators to clean all common areas in accordance with Health Officer orders, and provide SRO residents written information about transferring to an isolation and quarantine hotel and their right to return to their original SRO unit.

If three or more cases of COVID-19 occur within 14 days, the current ordinance requires DPH to notify all SRO Residents of a possible exposure, and refer them to COVID-19 testing and isolation and quarantine resources. And SRO owners or operators are required to provide DPH with access to a list of all people who lived or worked at the SRO hotel during the previous two-week period after the COVID-19 cases.

The current ordinance requires DPH to maintain a language accessible telephone hotline for SRO residents to ask questions about accessing COVID-19 health screenings, testing, and isolation and quarantine hotel rooms.

Amendments to Current Law

The Proposed Legislation would amend the Administrative Code by removing or updating references to rescinded Health Officer orders and superseded directives. The Proposed Legislation would remove the City policy that SRO residents be placed in and transported to isolation and quarantine hotels. And, the Proposed Legislation would end DPH's prior additional responsibilities in the event of any COVID-19 cases in an SRO hotel other than DPH's obligation to maintain a language-accessible phone line providing information to SRO residents regarding isolation and quarantine rules and testing resources. This obligation would end with the termination of the Health Officer's isolation and quarantine directives.

The Proposed Legislation would also create a new cleaning standard for high-touch surfaces in common areas of SRO hotels. The Proposed Legislation would require owners or operators of SRO hotels to clean and disinfect these surfaces at least once a day, provide soap and hand sanitizer in common areas, and maintain a log for inspection by DPH, upon request. A violation of this standard would constitute a public nuisance. If DPH engages in contact tracing or testing for any future contagious disease, the Proposed Legislation would also require owners and operators of SRO hotels to provide DPH with a list of all people who lived or worked at the SRO hotel during the previous two-weeks.

Background Information

This legislative digest reflects amendments made in the Rules Committee on April 18, 2022 to change the frequency at which high touch surfaces in common areas of SROs will be required to be cleaned from at least twice per day to at least once per day and to add a new requirement that owners and operators of SRO hotels provide soap or hand sanitizer in common areas of SRO hotels.

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing and, by its very nature, requires a public health approach that evolves with changing conditions. The Proposed Legislation will bring the law in line with current public health policy, remove outdated references to health orders and directives, and eliminate DPH responsibilities that no longer reflect the best COVID-19 health standards while maintaining information-sharing responsibilities.

Outside of the COVID-19 context, residents of SRO hotels continue to face health challenges. Many residents are over the age of 60 and/or experience serious health complications. These residents often share common cleaning, cooking, and lavatory facilities with other residents. High-touch surfaces within these spaces can act as transmission points for contagious diseases such as shigellosis, hepatitis, and norovirus. The enhanced cleaning and disinfection standard is designed to mitigate the transmission of contagious disease among SRO residents and employees by ensuring that pathogens on high-touch surfaces are periodically removed or destroyed and ensuring access to soap and hand sanitizer.

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