

Slowing the Spread of COVID-19 with Proper Ventilation

Q&A with Our Facilities Management Team

We asked our Facilities Maintenance Manager Amadu Kamara and Administrator of Operations David Baker to share how upgrades to the building's ventilation system will help to keep all of us healthy as we spend more time indoors.

Q. What was the state of our ventilation system pre-pandemic? Were there already systems in place that help to prevent the spread of disease?

A. Pre-pandemic, we relied primarily on regular filter changes in apartments, workspaces, common areas and HVAC infrastructure equipment. We also conducted periodic cleaning and replacement of fan coil units in apartments when needed. According to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), regular preventive replacement ensures this type of filtration provides healthy indoor air quality.

Q. What insights, new technologies or systems have you learned about during the pandemic that can help with infection precaution?

A. There have been many new developments. We also discovered and learned more about the effectiveness of existing technologies. We learned about state-of-the-art bipolar ionization products and upgrades that kill or filter out very high percentages of viruses, including previous and current strains of coronavirus. We also found upgraded filters for building ventilations systems.

Q. What updates are being made to our ventilation system, and how will they help with our infection precaution efforts?

A. We've taken several steps to make our building's ventilation system as effective as possible:

- Beginning in the spring, we upgraded all HVAC systems filtration from the recommended standard filters to highly rated MERV-13 filters. MERV stands for "minimum efficiency reporting value." An air filter's MERV rating measures how effectively the filter stops dust and other contaminants from passing through the filter into the air stream. MERV filter ratings start at number 1, and go up to 20.



Amadu Kamara



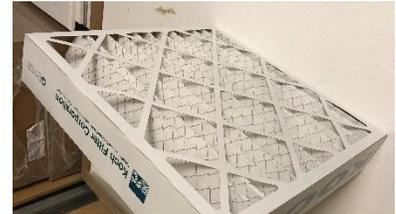
David Baker

*We are committed to keeping you, residents and staff healthy.
Please join us in our efforts to keep our community infection-free.*



Filters with higher MERV ratings trap small particles more effectively than those with lower MERV ratings. In general, filters with a rating of MERV-16 or below are considered optimal filters for residential, commercial and general hospital use. Those with a rating above 16 are typically used in surgical operating rooms. Our filters are replaced every three months.

- We installed a new, high-efficiency Energy Return Unit (ERU) in the Tower HVAC systems infrastructure in September. The ERU removes stale air and humidity from the building and replaces it with highly filtered and conditioned outside air.
- We've ordered ionization filtering devices for all elevators and are coordinating dates for installation.
- We are upgrading Tower apartment HVAC units to include an air filtration bipolar ionization option that mitigates or substantially reduces the spread of bacteria and viruses. To date, most of the 58 tier units have been replaced, and more apartments are in the queue to be replaced. This process will be ongoing as apartments are renovated.
- Environmental Services sanitizes and sterilizes all elevators every Friday evening and others areas, when needed and requested, with bipolar ionizing machines.



Both filters pictured here are MERV-13 rated, sized for different areas of the system.

Q. What is the status of our new investments in our ventilation systems?

A. Modernization of the Tower HVAC infrastructure and accompanying filtering systems is essentially complete. In the spring, the Small House Health Care Center filters were upgraded to MERV-13 rated filters; they are also replaced every three months. Next year's budget (meaning fiscal year 2022 that will begin on October 1, 2021) will include requests to fund additional HVAC infrastructure equipment replacement and upgrades.

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