



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

FACILITIES

CAMPUS FACILITIES FAQs

16, January, 2023
Facilities

Introduction

The University of Calgary is committed first and foremost to the health and safety of our entire community. Staff, Students and Community often have questions regarding the measures which have been put in place to ensure the safest campus possible. The intent of this document is to speak to the most common questions leadership has received.



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Campus HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning)

To ensure a thorough approach to maintaining a safe indoor environment, the role of HVAC systems and current maintenance practices are routinely assessed against industry guidelines. Utilizing guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), an assessment of practices in the context of the pandemic was conducted by University Facilities Management, Campus Engineering and Environmental Health & Safety. Throughout the pandemic, all practicable recommendations have been adopted and continue to be in place today.

HVAC FAQ

1. What role do HVAC systems play in the fight against COVID?

Ventilation is one of many control measures that help minimize the transmission of COVID-19 indoors as it is an effective measure at reducing the concentration of airborne contaminants, including airborne disease. This is achieved through a process known as dilution ventilation, where contaminated indoor air is removed and diluted with a mix of outdoor air and clean filtered air, lowering the exposure risk to occupants.

For blended air systems that supply a mixture of outdoor air and filtered air, there is no evidence currently that suggest the virus can transmit over long distances through building HVAC infrastructure, e.g., from a room, through the air ducts and appropriate air filtration media, then into a different area. The standard COVID-19 preventative measures, including self-screening, vaccinations and hand washing are the keys to prevention and mitigation. There is not one public health measure that can guarantee protection from COVID-19; multiple strategies are needed.

2. Research indicates that we should have MERV 13 filters installed on all centralized HVAC. What is UofC doing?

Yes, specific to COVID-19, ASHRAE recommends upgrading central air filtration to MERV-13, or the highest compatible with the filter rack.

All newer buildings and HVAC systems on-campus already utilize MERV-13 filters as the minimum standard for central air handling units. In response to ASHRAE's recommendations, the University has replaced lower MERV rated filters to MERV-13 and upgraded filter racks on older systems to accept MERV-13 rated filters. Your Facilities team continue to ensure that filters are in good operating condition, regularly inspected and replaced as required.

3. Can you tell me what the air flow/air changes per hour are in my office/space/building?

Most ventilation systems on campus are dynamic systems, adjusting air flow in response to environmental conditions, occupancy and functionality, such as laboratory vs office spaces. It is therefore very difficult to report on Air Changes per Hour (ACH), even as a building average.

While air flow and air change rates are one aspect of a healthy building environment, this number by itself cannot be relied upon as a definitive measure of the effectiveness of a system. Other aspects such as how the air flows through the space (fluid dynamics), concentration of people in the space, size/shape of the space and filtration, taken as a whole, provide a better picture when considering air quality. These aspects were all considered when your building was constructed, and the HVAC systems at the UofC are continuously monitored for correct operation by our Facilities team. HVAC issues are given the highest response priority. If you are concerned that your system may not be operating correctly (too hot/cold, no air coming from air diffuser), please submit a work request, and our HVAC team will investigate, but cannot supply information such as air flow or air changes per hour.

4. Can you adjust the air flow in my office/space because of COVID?

The HVAC systems in UofC buildings are designed and balanced to operate as a whole and adjusting one space may impact an adjacent space in a negative way. While our HVAC teams have some ability to adjust for temperature, they are very limited in their ability to adjust individual spaces for air flow, due to the risk of throwing the entire system out of balance. If you are concerned that your system may not be operating correctly (too hot/cold, no air coming from air diffuser), please submit a work request, and our HVAC team will investigate to ensure the system serving your area is operating as intended but may decline a request to adjust air flow to an individual area.

5. How has UofC prepared HVAC systems for the resumption of increased on-campus activities?

Despite significantly reduced building occupancy since the start of the pandemic, most campus HVAC systems were not completely shut off and have remained in operation. All inspection and maintenance activities have continued throughout the pandemic. Additionally, ASHRAE provided (and continues to provide) data driven recommendations to assist institutions in their approach to COVID. The UofC has adopted these recommendations wherever practicable.

Facilities staff have performed the following inspections and maintenance activities:

1. Filtration upgrades to ensure MERV 13₁ filtration throughout majority of campus buildings.
2. Regularly monitoring and adjusting HVAC air intake to optimize the amount of outside/fresh air supplied to campus buildings.
3. Extending building HVAC runtime operations to replace indoor air with outdoor air every morning before occupancy.

¹The Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) scale measures the effectiveness of air filters. Filters with higher MERV values capture a greater percentage of smaller particles from the air that passes through the filters.

Your Facilities HVAC team recognizes that clean and safe air is a key element to a healthy campus community!

[Take a deep breath and enjoy the award-winning air quality circulating through UCalgary's facilities | News | University of Calgary](#)

Water Quality

The University of Calgary is fortunate to be provided extremely high-quality drinking water from the City of Calgary, and your Facilities team takes great care in ensuring the integrity of this water is maintained throughout our facilities. Since 2016, Facilities has chaired a Water Management Committee with the mandate of ensuring the highest quality potable water is provided to our community. This Committee is comprised of representatives from Facilities Management, Facilities Development, EH&S and the Office of Sustainability. The water management program involves ongoing testing of potable water systems and continued verification/validation testing to ensure the effectiveness of our approach.

Caretaking

6. Will Caretaking continue to clean and disinfect high touch points?

Caretaking will continue to comply with Alberta Health guidelines.

7. Will Caretaking resume cleaning of office space and collect waste and recycling?

Offices and surrounding space are back to a monthly cleaning frequency. A Senior Leadership decision was communicated in spring of 2019; where garbage and recycling material will only be collected from the four (4) stream containers that are strategically located in proximity to your office. The decision was made so the Campus can improve on diversion from landfill and meet the zero-waste initiative. No individual office collection will be done by Caretaking.

8. The hand wipe and sanitizer dispensers are empty in my classroom/lecture theatre. Aren't these supposed to be filled?

The hand wipe and sanitizer dispensers were installed in classrooms that remained open during the pandemic. They were a part of the pandemic response measures which allowed us to host classes in a limited capacity. As we have now moved towards resuming post-COVID operations, we will no longer be filling the wipes or dispensers in classes/lecture theatres but will leave the brackets to be utilized in the unlikely event of future need. Your UofC COVID Steering Committee will continue to assess the situation and modify this approach as required.

General Facilities FAQ

9. What about Fume Hoods, Eye Wash Stations and Safety Showers?

Throughout the pandemic, Facilities has continued its legislated annual Fume Hood, Eye Wash and Shower testing programs. We do kindly remind lab and shop occupants of their responsibility to inspect and run

their eye wash stations weekly. This 'exercising' prevents calcium buildup from occurring and ensures proper function if required.

10. Something isn't right in my building/office/room. Who do I call?

Contact the Facilities Customer Care Centre. We're here to help!!

Online request

Submit your maintenance or caretaking request online through ARCHIBUS, Facilities' online service request tool.

Service Requests | University of Calgary (ucalgary.ca)

Email request

Submit your request to the Customer Care Centre by email.

myfacilities@ucalgary.ca

Call customer care

If you have any questions about submitting your service request online, you can contact the Customer Care Centre by phone.

(403) 220-7555