

## The Newest Hotel Amenity? Virus-Scrubbed Air

Hotels, and even some cruise ships, are installing state-of-the-art filtration systems that claim to tackle the coronavirus where it is believed to be the most dangerous: in the air.

When the coronavirus first hit, hotels quickly adopted enhanced cleaning polices, including germ-killing electrostatic spraying and ultraviolet light exposure in guest rooms and public areas.

But as research on virus spread has shifted focus from surface contact to [airborne transmission](#), some hotels and cruise ships are scrubbing the very air travelers breathe with a variety of air filtration and treatment systems.

“The best amenity that any hotel could provide under those circumstances is safety, especially in the air,” said Carlos Sarmiento, the general manager of the [Hotel Paso del Norte](#) in El Paso, Texas. The 1912 vintage hotel recently reopened after a four-year renovation that included installing a new air purification system called Plasma Air that emits charged ions intended to neutralize the virus and make particles easier to filter out.

With the new air-scrubbing campaigns, hotels are following airlines, many of which have hospital-grade, high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters that are said to be over 99 percent effective in capturing tiny virus particles, including the coronavirus.

Hotels and cruise ships can more easily ensure social distancing than airplanes, but, given the recent research on the importance of enhanced air filtration, some are adding air-cleaning dimensions to their heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, which already aim to remove dust, smoke, odors and allergens.

## From property-wide to portable

Throughout the summer, the [Madison Beach Hotel](#), part of Hilton's Curio Collection of hotels, in Madison, Conn., used its outdoor spaces for dining and even holding meetings in tents. But with the approach of cold weather, HVAC contractors installed an air purification system that uses UV light and ionized hydrogen peroxide in most public areas of the hotel, including the indoor restaurant and meeting rooms. Spa treatment rooms each have their own portable air purification systems.

“We wanted to create an environment that was as safe as possible,” said John Mathers, the hotel's general manager, adding that each guest room has its own closed HVAC system that doesn't mingle with others and thus doesn't require extra purifying. “The air being recirculated in your room is your air.”

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But many hotels are bringing units into the guest rooms for extra assurance. In Rhode Island, rooms at the [Weekapaug Inn](#) and [Ocean House hotel](#), both run by Ocean House Management, have [Molekule](#) air purifiers that destroy pollutants and viruses at a rate above 99 percent, [according](#) to the independent testing group [Aerosol Research and Engineering Laboratories](#).

Larger units were recently added to restaurants and public spaces, and the portable units have become a top seller, starting at around \$500, in Ocean House’s gift shop.

Decisions about installing air purification systems tend to happen at the property or ownership level, rather than the brand level. But Hilton has AtmosAir’s bipolar ionization air purification systems in its [Five Feet to Fitness](#) rooms, more than 100 guest rooms across 35 hotels that double as mini gyms with weights, indoor cycles and meditation chairs.

Many hotels have long offered allergy-free or wellness rooms to travelers that feature heightened purification systems. Pure Wellness has its [Pure Room](#) technology that claims to eliminate viruses, bacteria and fungi, including air [filters](#) effective enough to trap the coronavirus, in over 10,000 rooms worldwide.