Keyboard and Equipment wipe downs without disinfectant wipes

Shared keyboards and equipment should be disinfected regularly. This is an essential practice to mitigate exposure to COVID-19, influenza, and other communicable diseases. When disinfectant wipes are unavailable, the following is an alternate procedure for disinfection.

Alcohol based Keyboard or Equipment Wipe Down Procedure

1) Fill a ½ Liter water bottle style container with ≥ 70% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol.
2) Saturate a cloth or paper towel to the point of damp.
   a. Cloth or towel should not be saturated to the point of being able to squeeze alcohol from it.
   b. Stay clear of electrical equipment
3) To minimize the chance of fire, ensure computer or equipment is powered off or that wipe down occurs away from exposed wiring or leads – even low voltage leads. Alternately, disconnect the keyboard
4) Thoroughly wipe down keyboard or equipment, using the edge of the cloth or paper towel to work between rows.
   a. Cloth towel is superior for working between the rows of a keyboard. A KimWipe may be desired for optics or sensitive equipment.
5) Paper towel may clean 1-2 keyboards before needing disposal.
   a. Paper towels need to be completely dry before disposal.
   b. Paper towels will start to disintegrate after a few keyboards or pieces of equipment.
6) Cloth towel may clean numerous keyboards before drying out and needing re-application of ethanol.
   a. A single cloth towel could probably service an entire lab if the keyboards are not otherwise dirty.
   b. Non-viral / non-bacterial debris will cause the wipes to become soiled over time.
   c. Cloth towels can be re-used multiple times provided they are not soiled.
   d. Soiled cloth wipes may be disposed of in standard trash once they are completely dry.
      i. Must be completely dry before disposal – a pile of alcohol dampened cloths/towels has the potential to spontaneously combust.

Cloth wipes are a better “carrier” for ethanol than paper towels and are more durable. They add slightly to the overall cost.

It is recommend that people wear nitrile gloves while handling alcohols. Neither ethyl or isopropyl alcohol are hazardous for occasional skin contact, but they will dry people’s skin with repeated contact. The CDC endorses the use of both ethyl or isopropyl alcohol for disinfection use at concentrations ≥ 70%.