

Guidance for Wastewater Collection and Wastewater Treatment Operators During COVID-19 Alert Levels 4 and 5

Please see the bullets below for operational guidance on the operation and maintenance of wastewater collection and wastewater treatment systems during the COVID-19 pandemic Alert Levels 4 and 5.

Communities with Wastewater Collection Systems

- Based on material provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) there is no evidence to date that the COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewage systems including those with or without wastewater treatment. However, available literature suggests that coronavirus may persist in domestic wastewater for up to three days.
- Operators of wastewater systems must avoid direct contact with wastewater or aerosols generated by pumping systems since wastewater may contain coronavirus from affected individuals. Operators must use personal protective equipment such as gloves, face shields, goggles and mask, boots and appropriate exterior clothing where exposure is possible.
- Operators must remember to maintain good hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing, not touching their face, and no eating or smoking when working on their wastewater system until they have washed their hands.
- Any non-essential work should be halted. Work should be limited to emergency work such as lift station failures or sewer main blockages.
- Emergency work may include inspection of problem lift stations that are experiencing trouble because of an increased use of disposable wipes by residents. If communities are experiencing issues with disposable wipes in their collection system they should notify residents to not flush such items down their toilets. The City of Vancouver has some educational materials that could assist in informing residents (<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/liquid-waste/preventing-problemspipes/unflushables/Pages/default.aspx>).
- If your community is required to collect wastewater samples, minimize the operator's contact with the wastewater. Avail of sampling technologies to reduce contact.

Communities with RV Sewage Dumping Stations

- RV sewage dumping stations can be permitted to open if they have been properly designed and include the following components:
 - Sloped concrete pad that can be washed down and drains toward a hinged cap that is self-closing;

- An adequate length of flexible wash-down hose and a means to retract the hose when not in use;
- Wash-down hose must be equipped with a backflow prevention device that is compliant with CSA Standard B64.10-11 *Selection and Installation of Backflow Preventers* (pressure vacuum breaker at minimum); and
- A sign must be posted at the dumping station that the water hose is UNSAFE FOR DRINKING.
- A sign should also be posted reminding users about safe hygiene practices (i.e. hand washing after use), keeping the area clean, and maintaining physical distancing.

Communities with Wastewater Treatment Plants

- Operators of wastewater systems must avoid direct contact with wastewater or aerosols generated by pumping and treatment systems since wastewater may contain coronavirus from affected individuals. Operators should use personal protective equipment such as gloves, face shields, goggles and mask, boots and appropriate clothing where exposure is possible.
- When collecting operational or regulatory samples efforts should be made to minimize the operator's contact with the wastewater. Avail of sampling technologies to reduce contact.
- Communities with a wastewater treatment plant may have disinfection systems in place, such as UV or chlorination, to reduce the level of bacterial, viral and other microbial contaminants in the treated effluent.
- WHO information also suggests that lagoon systems are well suited to destroying pathogens given the relatively long retention time combined with sunlight.

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