

COVID-19 and Utility Resilience

Clean water and safe sanitation are essential, and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased pressure on water and wastewater utilities to perform their critical duties. To protect workers and prevent the spread of infection, utilities can take direct steps to prepare, respond and recover from COVID-19.

1 | Plant Entrance

- Limit access to non-essential personnel
- Health screen everyone who enters

2 | Administration/Office Buildings

- Implement work-from-home procedures when possible
- Disinfect common surfaces and work stations

3 | Plant Operations

- Utilize split/reduced shift work
- Cross-train staff for nonstandard work duties
- Consider sheltering-in-place: Provide critical employees onsite housing, meals, and basic living necessities

4 | Critical Supplies

- Ensure adequate supplies of chemicals, fuel, and PPE
 - Reference [FEMA PPE Preservation Guidelines](#)
- Source chemicals from multiple vendors

5 | Laboratory Testing

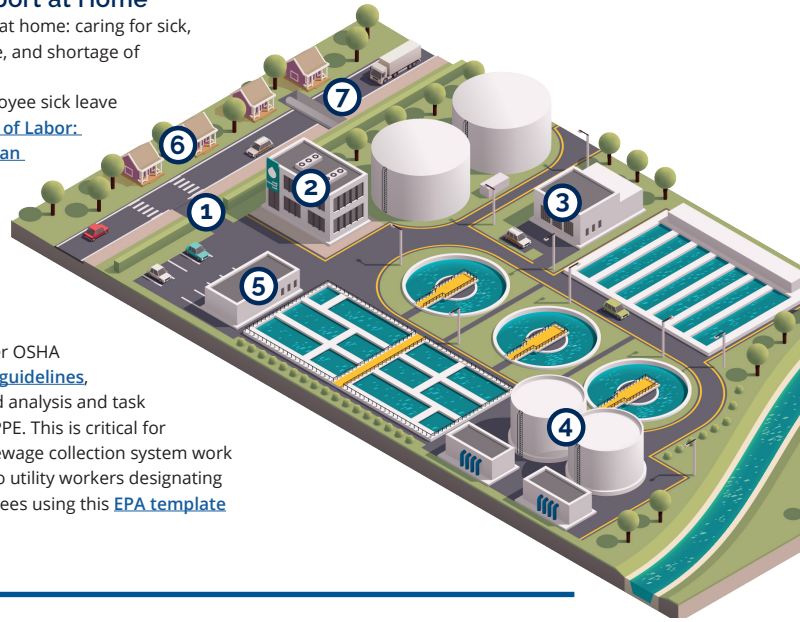
- Ensure redundancy in trained lab personnel
- Identify backup lab for off-site analytical work (Check out the [Water Laboratory Alliance](#))

6 | Employee Support at Home

- Help staff plan for issues at home: caring for sick, financial strains, childcare, and shortage of household supplies
- Consider additional employee sick leave or PTO ([U.S. Department of Labor: COVID-19 and the American Workplace](#))

7 | Field Operations

- Ensure employee safety requirements are met, per OSHA standards and [COVID-19 guidelines](#), through use of job hazard analysis and task specific procedures and PPE. This is critical for construction, field, and sewage collection system work
- Provide documentation to utility workers designating them as essential employees using this [EPA template](#)



Understanding and scrutinizing the effectiveness of your COVID-19 response will allow you to initiate course corrections as needed during the pandemic. Sharing best practices with other utilities will ensure that your short-term response is optimal and that your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) includes valuable lessons learned.

For more information, please [contact us](#) for a copy of our COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan Brochure.



Regulatory Requirements

- Comply with regulations and permits
- Know your federal and state's policies for enforcement discretion ([COVID-19 Implications for EPA's Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Program](#))

Steps for COVID-19 Related Compliance Issue:

- Take steps to mitigate event
- Document everything (before, during, and after event)
- Notify primacy agency immediately and continue communication
- Take steps to return to compliance
- Prepare contingencies
- Maintain documentation so it is available upon request



Emergency Response Planning

- Review your [Emergency Response Plan](#) and pandemic-specific Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
 - [Example template](#) and [guidance document](#)
- Update SOPs for critical functions
- Join your state's [WARN](#) program

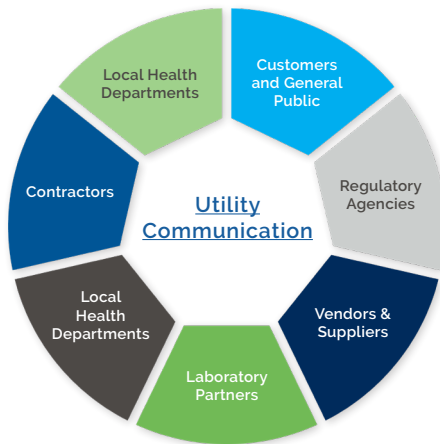


Legal Aspects

- Review contracts to address project delays, COVID-19 related costs, and essential vendors
- Review state workers compensation policies
- Consider litigation when implementing policy changes
- Seek legal counsel if necessary

Communication

Utilities should take a proactive approach in communicating to all parties involved in water treatment operations. Seek guidance from local authorities in your communities. Reach out to customers via letters, email, and social media to convey that water is safe to use and drink. Communicate early, frequently, and clearly.



Additional COVID-19 and Utility Resiliency Resources:

General Resources: [EPA](#), [CDC](#), [ASDWA](#), [AWWA](#), [WRF](#), [WEF](#), [Water ISAC](#), [IWA](#)

Utility/Operators Resources: [EPA Incident Action Checklist](#), [EPA Water Utility Resources](#), [Resources for Small Public Water System Operators](#), [Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Waste Management for COVID-19 \(WHO, UNICEF\)](#)

Tools: [EPA Tabletop Exercise Tool and Pandemic Scenario](#), [Water Utility Response On The Go](#)

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