

Coronavirus/COVID-19 Readiness: Sustaining Operations

Water operators should be prepared to address potential impacts to supply due to COVID-19. Water systems play a vital role in public health, and the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) is here to help systems put measures in place that ensure seamless operations during the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.

Critical Operations Preparedness

- Identify essential employees required to maintain continuous operation and designate an emergency backup for these employees in the case they cannot report to work.
- Strategize implementation of an ancillary workforce (e.g., contractors, employees in other job titles/descriptions, retirees) to operate utilities on an emergency basis.
- Stay stocked on chemical supplies and order products ahead of schedule to avoid delays from understaffed chemical suppliers.
- Generate backup supplier contact list for essential chemical and operation needs.
- Update/create detailed written instructions for crucial operations (i.e., shutdown, water quality sampling, public notification).
- Review/update emergency response plan and contacts. Identify key customers—hospitals or care facilities—with special needs.
- Discuss cybersecurity precautions when using remote access. Back up critical files frequently as a prevention measure to restore data.
- Consider emergency food and overnight necessities at 24-hour facilities.
- Encourage personnel to stay home when sick. Provide work-from-home or sick leave options. Discuss backup or alternative shift rotations for personnel that need to stay home to care for themselves and/or loved ones.
- Make plan with family and any groups you lead in case of school/work closures.
- Limit meetings, gatherings and travel. Encourage personnel to postpone all non-essential travel to areas affected by COVID-19.

Public water systems are expected to continue to monitor water quality and provide sample results to regulators during the COVID-19 epidemic.

There may be systems, which due to an outbreak of COVID-19, require operational assistance. Your neighboring water systems are a great resource for backup coverage in case of emergencies. You can also contact the NDDEQ Drinking Water Program for more information and assistance at 701-328-5211.