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Department of Environmental Protection

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MassDEP COVID-19 FAQs for Public Water Suppliers

This document's latest questions and answers are highlighted in yellow.

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TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370

MassDEP Website: www.mass.gov/dep

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Public Water Suppliers: you are advised to contact your MassDEP regional office for assistance on response to coronavirus (COVID-19)

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MassDEP has heard from operators of Drinking Water Systems in Massachusetts asking for guidance or information relative to operational changes at these facilities due to Coronavirus concerns.

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MassDEP is aware that COVID-19 is disrupting many normal activities and that water suppliers may face particular challenges in the days and weeks ahead. MassDEP commits to regular communication with suppliers to help address these challenges. Among other steps, MassDEP has established a weekly teleconference with public water suppliers where issues can be raised, discussed and solutions can be developed.

MassDEP is providing these responses to questions from stakeholders in the water supply industry. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be updated periodically.

Permit

Question (Permit1): On March 26, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Order Suspending State Permitting Deadlines and Extending the Validity of State Permits. How does this affect my permit?

Answer: The Order states, among other provisions, that a permit or approval by a state permitting valid as of March 10, 2020, shall not lapse or otherwise expire during the state of emergency and the expiration date of approval shall toll during the state of emergency. For specific permit related issues, contact your regional MassDEP office.

Question (Permit2): Is there guidance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on compliance and enforcement?

Answer: In a memorandum from Susan Parker Bodine, dated March 26, 2020

([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/oecamemooncovid19implications.pdf)

[03/documents/oecamemooncovid19implications.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/oecamemooncovid19implications.pdf)), the EPA describes its enforcement discretion policy for many of its programs, including the Safe Drinking Water Act. The memo states,

“Public water systems have a heightened responsibility to protect public health because unsafe drinking water can lead to serious illnesses and access to clean water for drinking and handwashing is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the EPA has heightened expectations for public water systems. The EPA expects operators of such systems to continue normal operations and maintenance as well as required sampling to ensure the safety of our drinking water supplies. The EPA expects laboratories performing analysis for water systems to continue to provide timely analysis of samples and results. States play the lead role on drinking

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water issues, but the EPA also has important drinking water enforcement and oversight responsibilities, including direct implementation responsibilities in some locations.

In the event of worker shortages in the water sector, the EPA will consider continued operation of drinking water systems to be the highest priority. In anticipation of worker shortage and laboratory capacity problems, the EPA considers the following tiers of compliance monitoring to assure the safety of our drinking water supplies and prioritize prevention of acute risks. Of highest priority is monitoring required under National Primary Drinking Water Regulations to protect against microbial pathogens. Additional priorities include nitrate/nitrite and Lead and Copper Rule monitoring followed by contaminants for which the system has been non-compliant.”

Sampling

Question (Sampling1): How do public water suppliers protect themselves or the people present at sampling sites?

Answer: Maintaining safe drinking water is an essential public health requirement. The following links from OSHA and information from Governor Baker’s COVID-19 webpage provide the most up-to-date guidance: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf> and <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives>

Question (Sampling2): What sampling is required if a PWS is completely closed?

Answer: No sampling is required of a closed public water system. When a PWS is closing, let MassDEP regional staff know. Follow RTCR (Revised Total Coliform Rule) seasonal start-up procedures when the public water supply comes back on-line. For more information see: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/seasonal-start-up-information-certification-and-checklist-for-non-community-systems>.

Question (Sampling3): What should we do if the PWS is not closed, but the operator cannot take the sample at a location (maybe he is not allowed to enter)?

Answer: Collect a sample from an alternate location, preferably the upstream or downstream repeat site for the original sampling location, or a nearby site where you have access. When choosing alternate locations, it is important to achieve geographical coverage. For new locations that are not currently part of your coliform sampling plan, assign the next highest number from your existing locations and indicate that this is an emergency location by adding an “E” to the end of the new number (e.g. 12E). Include the full address of any new location on the chain of custody. Have your lab

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add to the comments/notes on eDEP/Bacteriological Report "Alternate RS per COVID-19." Prior approval to use these sites is not required by MassDEP during this emergency. Notify MassDEP's regional office via email or at program.director-dwp@mass.gov to let us know about the access issue and to identify the alternate location(s) that was sampled. The goal is to collect the proper number of samples using alternate or other locations acceptable to the system's certified operator or designee.

Question (Sampling4): What if we have tried everything but still cannot collect a sample?

Answer: Contact MassDEP immediately to review alternatives. Based on system configuration, additional sampling may be allowed at some available locations.

Question (Sampling5): Can a public water system change the timing of required samples? For example, can a public water system shift samples that were to be collected during week 1 into week 2 and shift the samples to be collected during week 3 into week 4 so that sampling is only conducted in two of the four weeks?

Answer: The requirement in the Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) is to collect samples "at regular time intervals throughout the month," as laid out in a public water system's MassDEP-approved coliform sampling plan. Public water systems that need to replace weekly sampling with samples taken every other week should contact their regional MassDEP office.

Question (Sampling6): We sample every other week. If we are required to do 25 samples per month, can cut out a few sites and double up other sites and still meet the 25 are we required to covered?

Answer: Public water systems should follow sampling as close to normal procedures as possible, given the systems' concern about access. Try to sample at up and downstream sites if the routine site is unavailable. If the supplier must return to an accessible location, samples should be collected in different weeks to least provide some temporal confirmation about the system. The minimum number of samples for the month must be collected and be representative of the distribution system. Contact MassDEP regional staff for assistance.

Question (Sampling7): What if I can't collect all my required bacteria samples or do so after the end of the month/quarter?

Answer: According to EPA, this will be considered a monitoring violation and public notice will be required but it is expected that both the state and EPA will exercise enforcement discretion in responding to these situations.

Question (Sampling8): Is there more guidance on bacteria monitoring?

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Answer:

- **Confirm your sampling pool now!** PWS should contact their regular locations including upstream and downstream sites **now** to determine if access is still available or if special precautions can be used (e.g. Personal Protective Equipment) that would allow for continued monitoring.
- **Expand your sampling pool now!** Identify additional locations for monitoring and contact your MassDEP regional office. Use the same format as your current coliform sampling plan.

Question (Sampling9): We need to discuss non-RTCR distribution system sampling events like Disinfection By-Products or UCMR4, which will require the collection of numerous cyanobacteria samples that will not provide additional information and could divert manpower when operators are out sick.

Answer: PWS should immediately evaluate their sampling plans to identify acceptable alternate locations for any sampling sites that are not available. Disinfection By-Product Rule samples can be collected at locations near your existing sites. Notify MassDEP if you need to move any DBPR locations during this emergency. However, LCR samples should not be moved to new locations without MassDEP approval as these sites need to be confirmed as the same or higher tier under the rule.

MassDEP will discuss UCMR4 sampling with EPA as this program is under federal oversight.

Question (Sampling10): Can we get relief from EPA on the RTCR rules/requirements (i.e. a single confirmatory sample from that site or nearby) before we trigger the usual requirements?

Answer: At this time, EPA is urging that all regulatory requirements be met. Failure to collect required samples will result in a violation that triggers public notice. Contact your MassDEP regional Office about the specifics your situation. MassDEP will consult with USEPA on the implementation of the newly issued federal enforcement policy.

Question (Sampling11): We are scheduled for Lead and Copper sampling in the 2nd quarter 2020. There is a lot of interaction with the public during this process and I am concerned about not being welcome to sample. Does MassDEP still expect us to meet this requirement?

Answer: As Lead and Copper Rule sampling is a homeowner-based sampling program you should be reaching out to your volunteer homeowners now to confirm whether they plan to continue their participation or not. There does not need to be in-person contact between residents collecting samples and those dropping off sample bottles/picking up samples. Explaining to them that bottles

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can be left outside their residences on a specific day so that they can collect samples the next morning may reassure them that contact with your staff may be minimal. Providing them with a phone number where they can reach staff should they have questions and asking if they would be willing to provide the same to you could also reduce the need for any face-to-face contact.

Question (Sampling12): Can DEP provide any guidance on Lead and Copper sampling? We are required to collect 60 samples twice a year. It might be difficult to get residents to collect samples.

Answer: Systems that sample for Lead and Copper twice a year collect samples between January and June and again between July and December. So, you have some flexibility as to when during those time periods sampling will get done. Now is a good time to contact the residences on your primary and alternate sampling location lists to determine whether they are willing to continue participation in the Lead and Copper sampling program in 2020. If you need to change sampling locations based on refusals to participate, contact MassDEP regional staff for assistance with completing revised Lead and Copper Sampling Plans and Highest-Tier-Site forms. New Lead and Copper sampling locations must be approved prior to sample collection, to assure samples are collected at the highest-risk locations.

Question (Sampling13): What seasonal start-up procedures steps should a closed public water system take prior to opening?

Answer: Unless directed otherwise, any public water system which has closed or will close due to COVID-19 will be required to collect and report Special Sample/s (SS sample type code) and to complete and submit a Seasonal Start-Up Certification form to ensure proper re-activation of the system, including but not limited to flushing, disinfection if needed, and procurement of absent SS samples prior to opening.

To certify to MassDEP, the public water system should **modify the Seasonal Start-Up form by adding at the top of the form "EMERGENCY CLOSURE ON (insert date) due to COVID-19"**.

For more information see: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/seasonal-start-up-information-certification-and-checklist-for-non-community-systems>.

Question (Sampling14): Can I sample an exterior spigot or hydrant to evaluate its use as an alternate routine sampling site under the RTCR before it is considered a compliance location?

Answer: This is a last resort; the risk for contamination is higher at an outside spigot or hydrant and the chance that inadequate cleaning and flushing may cause bacterial results to be positive. Bacterial contamination of your water supplies could alarm your customers. Work with MassDEP to see if there is a better alternative. However, MassDEP will allow a PWS to inspect, clean, flush and sample an

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exterior spigot to evaluate its potential use as an alternate RTCR sampling site without that result being considered for compliance.

The spigot or hydrant must be assigned a new sample location number that ends in E (e.g. 015E) and the initial sample labeled a Special Sample on the chain of custody submitted to the laboratory. All Special Samples must be reported to MassDEP and will not be considered for compliance - even if they are clean. Once a PWS considers a spigot acceptable then compliance samples, using the same new location number but labeled Routine Samples, can be collected. The first Routine Sample must be collected no earlier than 24 hours after the Special Sample used to evaluate the spigot.

Once an exterior spigot or hydrant has been accepted for compliance sampling all bacterial-positive samples that are not invalidated under 310 CMR 22.05(3) will require repeat monitoring (UR/DR/OR) and will be used in evaluating if an RTCR Treatment Technique Trigger has been met and if an E. coli MCL violation has occurred. For more information see (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/bacteria-sampling-at-outside-tapsspigotshose-bibs/download>, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/bacteria-sampling-at-hydrants-using-hydrant-sampler/download>).

Question (Sampling15): Our current Lead and Copper sampling plan states that we are to collect 40 samples in the 2nd quarter and 40 samples in the 4th quarter of this year. These samples are difficult to obtain under normal circumstances. Would we be eligible for some sort of relief or restructuring regarding lead and copper sampling?

Answer: EPA's enforcement discretion policy, dated March 26, 2020 (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/oecamemooncovid19implications.pdf>), emphasizes the importance of protecting public health but also prioritizes monitoring in the case of a worker shortage. For specific permit related issues, contact your regional MassDEP office.

Question (Sampling16): Can trihalomethane (THM) testing be on a different schedule?

Answer: THM and haloacetic acids five (HAA5) testing is still required but alternate sites can be used if access to approved sites is limited.

Question (Sampling17): Could MassDEP provide some further clarification on the bacteria sampling guidance they provided with the use of alternative sample sites? In the FAQs, there is guidance on properly identifying the sample and notifying MassDEP's regional offices.

Answer: Outside taps, spigots, hose bibs, and hydrants are open to the atmosphere, dust, and animals, and may be subject to higher levels of contamination than inside sampling taps. As such,

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outside bacteria sampling sites are not generally recommended. MassDEP has provided guidance on sample collection at spigots and hydrants if, during the COVID-19 emergency, a public water has no other choice for a bacteria sampling location (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/bacteria-sampling-at-outside-tapsspigotshose-bibs/download> and <https://www.mass.gov/doc/bacteria-sampling-at-hydrants-using-hydrant-sampler/download>.)

Question (Sampling18): When it comes to the use of spigots / hydrants, there is mention of those locations being considered “special samples” first and that a “routine sample” is to be collected no earlier than 24 hours after the special sample. Is there an expected timeframe of when the follow-up sample should be taken?

Answer: If a PWS chooses to use a spigot/hydrant sample site as a last resort or to evaluate the spigot/hydrant, the PWS is encouraged to collect a special sample prior to collecting a routine sample. A routine sample at the evaluated spigot/hydrant must be conducted 24 or more hours after collecting the special evaluation sample.

Question (Sampling19): For the follow-up sample, is it just the one sample site being taken or does the entire round need to be taken at the same time? For example, say we sampled 001E, 002, and 01G-RW with 001E being a special sample at a spigot. Would we need to do follow up sampling at just the 001E spigot location or all three locations?

Answer: In the provided example above, if the first sample from the outdoor spigot (location 001E) was coded as a Special Sample (type code 'SS') for evaluation purposes, then the PWS would need to re-sample that site after at least 24 hours to obtain their routine sample (type code 'RS'). However, if the PWS did not collect their raw water (01G-RW) the same day this routine sample (001E RS) is collected, and there is a coliform detect, then, in addition to the repeat samples required by the Revised Total Coliform Rule, the Ground Water Rule would require an additional triggered source water sample at 01G-RW. So it would make more sense to collect the evaluation sample before the routine set so that all distribution samples that are being counted for compliance and the raw water source sample were taken on the same day. For this type of case specific question and assistance please contact your regional Drinking Water Program contact.

Question (Sampling20): It sounds like we need approval of this outside sample location before we resample, what will this approval look like? What is the expected timeframe of approval so that the initial sampling, approval from DEP, and subsequent sampling can be conducted within the compliance period. We are concerned with timelines for small

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systems that may require alternative sample sites or need subsequent resampling per the guidance.

Answer: If you need to return to the spigot/hydrant for future sampling during this COVID-19 emergency you may do so. Please contact your regional office for specific instructions for your system.

Question (Sampling21): Along the same topic, can DEP clarify that if an alternative location is used but it is not an outside spigot / hydrant, that additional sampling is not required? Only additional sampling is required in the case of using a spigot / hydrant as an alternative location.

Answer: If a PWS spigot/hydrant sample is positive for bacteria the PWS must follow all requirements for bacteria positive samples including sample collection at upstream and downstream location for that spigot/hydrant. Please contact your regional office for specific instructions for your system.

Question (Sampling22): With the recommendation / guidance to flush schools to mitigate lead and copper levels prior to their reopening, how soon after reopening and flushing can the samples be conducted? Depending on when facilities are able to reopen there may be a short time-frame in Q2 to conduct their required sampling on top of flushing for schools that are PWS. Additionally, if many of these locations that require Q2 lead and copper sampling re-open right before the end of Q2, will there be flexibility on the reporting timeline for these samples if the labs are inundated with samples and cannot get the reports or e-filing done by the 10th of the month?

Answer: Flushing should be completed prior to the schools' opening and samples should be collected under normal operations after 8-18 hours of stagnation. Please contact your MassDEP regional contact for more information. LCR reporting deadlines are federal and state requirements and a violation will be assessed for all violations. However, EPA and the state will consider enforcement discretion when considering required actions following violations specifically related to COVID-19. Please contact your MassDEP regional contact for more information.

Question (Sampling23): Can a system use an outside spigot for disinfection by-product sampling?

Answer: Yes. You may use an outside tap/spigot as long as you can get a controlled laminar flow, the sample is not turbid and all sample collection procedures are followed. See EPA's Quick Guide to

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sample collection at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/drinking_water_sample_collection.pdf .

Question (Sampling24): Are there any sample taps that water departments could integrate into the distribution system that could be used as routine sample sites? This would eliminate the access problems we are having now, should something like this happen in the future.

Answer: MassDEP will consider Sampling Stations based on a case-by-case review of a public water systems' sampling plan. Sampling Stations are outside devices used for collecting water samples for water quality monitoring purposes. These sampling stations are typically positioned at street level, where they connect to a local water main, and are designed as enclosed, secured boxes containing a small sink and spigot to aid in sample collection. These devices may be prevalent in other states and have been known to facilitate sample collection when otherwise impossible or challenging. Please note these devices are more representative of water in the main rather than at the customer's tap and as such are not typically approved by MassDEP's Drinking Water Program for bacteria sampling locations. However, MassDEP's Drinking Water Program may on a case-by-case basis approve sampling stations as part of a public water system's bacteria or other water quality evaluation sampling plan if local conditions make their use necessary. Sampling Stations must be certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 61 and will require New Technology Approval by the department per 310 CMR 22.04(8).

Question (Sampling25): What should we do about LCR samples for schools as they are not open and may not be open before the sampling period (June 30) ends?

Answer: The public water system (PWS) must ensure that the Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA) schools and early education and care facilities (EECF) are sampled while school is in session (two samples in two schools). Therefore, sampling of schools/EECFs may be delayed until after May 4, 2020, or later if the opening of schools/EECFs are further delayed. PWSs can fulfill the schools/EECFs sampling requirement by adding the schools in the following monitoring period when the schools/EECFs are back to routine operations.

If the PWS is a Non-transient Non-community (NTNC) school and is currently closed, sampling is still required if the facility reopens prior to June 30, 2020. If the facility does not reopen prior to June 30, 2020, a sampling violation will be assessed if the facility was open for any period between January 1, 2020, and June 30, 2020.

Question (Sampling26): Are PWS allowed to collect a Special Sample ("SS" sample type code) for evaluation purposes for an INTERIOR location (inside a home or business) prior to

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selecting the site as an alternate routine sample location for bacteriological analysis (total coliform) during the COVID-19 emergency?

Answer: No. PWS may NOT collect a Special Sample for evaluation purposes for an INTERIOR alternate routine location. The opportunity to conduct Special Sampling ("SS" sample type code) for evaluation purposes prior to selecting an alternate routine bacteriological analysis (total coliform) site during the COVID-19 emergency is limited to outdoor spigots and hydrants. A PWS should use its best professional judgement when deciding whether an interior tap would be appropriate for sampling. This decision, for example, should rule out locations with whole house (Point of Entry (POE)) or fixture (Point of Use (POU)) treatment as well as locations that are not sanitary such as a janitorial slop sink.

Question (Sampling27): We are scheduled for Lead & Copper sampling in Quarter 3. In the past, MassDEP has provided an approved list of primary and alternative sampling locations. Will MassDEP be providing a similar list this year, or should we use the list of locations from our last round of Lead & Copper sampling?

Answer: It is the responsibility of each public water system to provide MassDEP with a list of primary and alternative sites for MassDEP approval. If your regional office normally provides you with a reminder of your approved sampling sites list each year, or at least reviews your list, we encourage you to discuss your lead and copper sampling plan with your regional office.

Question (Sampling28): With school closed for the rest of the year, what about LCR sampling?

Answer: This question was answered previously. See Question (Sampling 25).

Question (Sampling29): In trying to locate sampling sites at a facility, the Operator found that some of the fixtures within the facility are electronic eye activated with tempered water. What is EPA's or DEP's position on testing tempered water for lead and copper?

Answer: Tempered water fixtures provide a mix of hot and cold water. Hot water is known to leach more lead. Therefore, this type of fixture should only be used as an LCR sampling site if there are no other alternatives. If selected, the results from the fixture will not be invalidated based on tempered water fixture selection. If used as LCR sampling site, it should be identified as tempered water fixture on the report.

Question (Sampling30): "NHDES has a letter on their website and it appears as though they put out this letter to non-community systems and seasonal systems impacted by COVID. It strongly urges them to continue routine monitoring or give them steps they need to take if

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they do not, <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/documents/pws-bacteria-sampling.pdf>. Is there a similar communication DEP could send out to small systems and seasonal systems with a similar message especially in light of potential openings looming for many in the state?"

Answer: Mass DEP has been working directly with seasonal and closed or low flow system that have notified MassDEP of their operational status. MassDEP has provided the known systems with one-on-one technical assistance. In addition, MassDEP Drinking Water Program has provided the following technical assistance information for seasonal, closed or operating under low flow non-community or small PWS. This information was published in Drinking Water Update Email 5-15-2020 located at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/communication-to-public-water-suppliers#newsletters-> and provides guidance for the following types of non-community or small PWS operation status:

1. Seasonal Systems
2. Public Water Systems that continued operations including operator oversight inspections and routine water quality monitoring
3. Public Water Systems that DID NOT continue operations (including operator oversight inspections and routine water quality monitoring), BUT DID PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION to MassDEP of the temporary closure
4. Public Water Systems that DID NOT continue operations (including operator oversight inspections and routine water quality monitoring), AND DID NOT PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION to MassDEP of the temporary closure.

In addition, MassDEP regional offices continue to work known seasonal or closed PWS to ensure that they are aware of our Start-up requirements and guidance. Please contact your regional office contact for more system specific information.

Question (Sampling 31): For an Non-transient Non-Community (NTNC) public water system that exceeded the copper action level only, not lead, would a documented comprehensive building flushing program be an acceptable alternative instead of installing corrosion control treatment (CCT) or physically replacing all lead-containing or copper plumbing materials?

Answer: According to EPA, flushing or use of bottled water is not a long-term alternative option in lieu of CCT. For more information regarding CCT options see: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/optimal-corrosion-control-treatment-evaluation-technical-recommendations>.

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Question (Sampling 32): I took start-up samples (SS) on March 23, 2020. All samples came back negative, total coliform absent. The system was due to open April 1 but has not opened to the public yet. Are my start-up samples still good or do I have to take additional (SS) samples before the system is open to the public? There is no firm date when system will open to the public yet. During the delayed opening, I have been running water in fixtures, flushing system and doing residuals routinely.

Answer: Start-up samples are intended to identify contamination that may have been introduced during system depressurization and subsequent repressurization.

If the PWS has maintained pressurization since collecting the initial special samples round, operated the water system as described and collected routine bacteria during its closure, initial vulnerability has been determined and the water system continued in operation. Unless otherwise specified by your MassDEP Regional Office, MassDEP will allow the PWS to remain open with a routine round of samples and not place any additional financial burden on the PWS by requiring another round of special samples.

If the PWS maintained pressurization since collecting the initial start-up special samples but did not collect routine monthly bacteria in the weeks since start-up, The PWS effectively 'closed' and should complete the modified start-up form and procedures prior to opening.

If the PWS has depressurized since the initial start-up special samples were collected MassDEP will require the PWS to repeat the start-up special samples and procedures prior to reopening.

MassDEP encourages each system to contact their regional MassDEP Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) contact if there are any questions on re-opening.

Question (Sampling 33): Facilities want to be ready to open when they get the allowance from the state to open up, especially the seasonal systems that rely on coordinating with contract operators. If seasonal startups are done in preparation for their opening like normal and they are routinely sampling water quality like normal, can they open whenever the time comes without additional processes and paperwork? Some of these places are preparing for opening like normal and do have limited activity on site by staff who do use the water, they just aren't open to the greater public and seeing usage rates as high as normal. We understand flushing is recommended practice for these situations as previously provided by MassDEP.

Answer: If a PWS has completed the special start-up monitoring, reporting and certification, and has continued operating and routinely sampling water quality the PWS may continue operations.

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PWSs are encouraged to notify their MassDEP regional Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) contact of their actions and to have any questions answered.

Question (Sampling 34): Other small systems may have had to temporarily shut down and haven't been able to routinely monitor water quality. They also face uncertainty when they can open again but do want to prepare by doing start up procedures and sampling. Can they do start up procedures and then routinely monitor for TC and routinely flush so that they are ready to open up when the time comes even if it is a few months down the line? For some systems, they aren't going to see normal water usage or normal numbers of people using the water for some time due to a variety of factors, mandated office staffing levels, for example.

Answer: Yes. PWSs that complete the special start-up monitoring, reporting and certification and then continue to operate and routinely sample water quality may open to the public when the sector is allowed to open under the Governor's Directive.

MassDEP encourages all closed PWS to operate in this manner, if possible, to be ready for their sector reopening date.

PWSs are further encouraged to notify their MassDEP regional Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) contact of their actions and to have any questions answered.

Inspections and Repairs

Question (Inspections/Repairs1): What about Cross-Connection Inspections?

Answer: Systems are usually required to inspect twice a year, with the next inspection due to be completed by the end of June 2020. MassDEP suggests that public water supplies evaluate their cross-connection control programs and reschedule any surveys or tests to a later in the year consistent with the state regulations, recognizing that we might have more guidance later.

Question (Inspections/Repairs2): Can DEP give PWSs time extensions on paperwork deliverables, such as Sanitary Survey responses, Consumer Confidence Reports, cross-connection reports, and monthly chem sheets?

Answer: MassDEP will consider these types of requests and will continue to re-evaluate circumstances throughout the spring and summer. Contact your regional office of MassDEP.

Question (Inspections/Repairs3): Is there any guidance/recommendations regarding repair work (other than emergency work) with in the distribution systems?

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Answer: Public water systems should discuss priority projects with their MassDEP regions.

Question (Inspections/Repairs4): Are MassDEP staff performing on-site inspections? We are planning to start up a new pump station within the next 4 weeks, but MassDEP is required to perform an on-site inspection prior to startup.

Answer: Please stay in touch with MassDEP on time sensitive inspections.

Question (Inspections/Repairs5): I'm hearing of some schools deciding to just shut their buildings down and lock the doors during this crisis. I'm not a big fan of this being I'm a licensed plumber and know too much about stagnant water. Does DEP have any guidance for schools here in MA regarding what they should be doing during these shut downs? At least during our summer breaks water is moving with all the cleaning going on. This is different as the water will be sitting anywhere from a minimum of 2 weeks and potentially longer.

Answer: The potential for lead and copper to leach into water can increase the longer the water remains in contact with lead or copper in plumbing. As a result, facilities that closed their buildings due to COVID-19, may have elevated lead and/or copper concentrations.

MassDEP's Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA) Program, in coordination with the EPA's 3Ts program guidance on lead in school drinking water, recommends you perform a thorough flushing of your drinking water pipes and fixtures prior to re-opening your facility. For guidance on school flushing see https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-09/documents/flushing_best_practices_factsheet_508.pdf. Also, MassDEP currently has free technical assistance and testing available for drinking water in schools and childcare facilities and encourages all schools and childcare facilities to participate in the program. See <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/technical-assistance-in-2020-for-lead-in-school-drinking-water>. If you have any questions please contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov Subject: Lead in School or contact our technical assistance partner, UMass, at lccadep@umass.edu or 413-545-0840.

Question (Inspections/Repairs6): What about biannual flushing?

Answer: Normal water system operational activities, such as routine flushing, may still occur.

Question (Inspections/Repairs7): Can DEP give PWSs time extensions on Annual Statistical Reports?

Answer: MassDEP will extend the deadline for filing Annual Statistical Reports from April 30 to July 1 but encourages public water systems to file as soon as possible.

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Question (Inspections/Repairs8): What if a reduced pressure zone backflow (RPBP) device on a residential fire sprinkler systems fails? The device may fail during a dirty water event or water break. The relief device could fail catastrophically dumping as much water as can fit through a one-inch line. Public Water Suppliers are not allowed to stop water at a fire sprinkler without a permit from the fire department. Can the Fire Department waive the permit to allow the Public Water Supplier to shut off the stream at the curb and then notify the Fire Department?

Answer: Under Mass General Law chapter 148 section 27A

(<https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexx/chapter148/section27a>) a PWS can shut off water to a residential fire sprinkler system "for the purpose of making necessary repairs or preventing freezing or other property damage; provided, however, that the head of the fire department is notified immediately of such emergency action." The head of the fire department shall also be notified when the system, main, hydrant or other device is placed back in service.

Question (Inspections/Repairs9): Reduced pressure backflow preventers) must be tested twice per year. Many facilities are closed and or not allowing access. Will we be in violation if we are unable to test these devices?

Answer: For RPBPs that are installed in facilities that have closed or where outside parties are not being granted access during the current emergency, the two times per year frequency of testing is changed this year only to one time per year except for RPBPs where the PWS is aware that it is failing or if a water supply emergency occurs at the facility. Keep in mind that RPBPs at facilities that use water for less than six months of the year are only required to be tested once and that although the two annual routine tests must normally be at least five months apart MassDEP, its designee or the PWS may issue a written approval to allow these two tests to occur closer together.

Question (Inspections/Repairs10): Schools are closed during this crisis. As a licensed plumber, I am concerned about stagnant water. Does DEP have any guidance on what schools should do during these shut downs? During summer, water moves and cleans the pipes - unlike now when systems are closed. The potential for lead and copper to leach into water can increase the longer the water remains in contact with lead or copper in plumbing. As a result, facilities that closed their buildings due to COVID-19, may have elevated lead and/or copper concentrations.

Answer: MassDEP's Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA) Program, in coordination with the EPA's 3Ts program guidance on lead in school drinking water, recommends that schools perform flushing throughout their drinking water pipes and fixtures prior to re-opening the facility. For guidance on school flushing see https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-09/documents/flushing_best_practices_factsheet_508.pdf. Also, MassDEP currently has free technical assistance and testing available for drinking water in schools and childcare facilities and encourages all schools and childcare facilities to participate in the program. See <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/technical-assistance-in-2020-for-lead-in-school-drinking-water>. If you have any questions please contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at

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program.director- dwp@mass.gov Subject: Lead in School or contact our technical assistance partner, UMass, at lccadep@umass.edu or 413-545-0840.

Question (Inspections/Repairs11): What are some actions that schools, and early education and care facilities interested in addressing lead in drinking water can still take (remotely) while they wait to re-open?

Answer: There are several optional actions that schools and facilities can take now to prepare themselves for when they reopen and MassDEP's Expanded Assistance Program full resumes. These include:

1. Apply for full participation in the Expanded Assistance Program, which includes free technical assistance and lead in water testing. Go to: www.mass.gov/assistance-program-for-lead-in-school-drinking-water
2. Update the facilities' information on lead in drinking water testing and remediation actions on MassDEP's online management tool. Go to: <https://script.google.com/macros/s/AKfycbxP99K-Cd5B3ioE7nswN0peOEndcGrXwV6zJcS5iHxzGO55B1k/exec>
3. If the schools have not used MassDEP's online management tool, they should learn more about it and apply for access to it at the link in #2.
4. Learn about the MA Clean Water Trust's School Water Improvement Grant (SWIG) program, which provides funding for the purchase and installation of filtered water bottle filling stations in eligible public schools and public early education and care facilities. Go to: www.mass.gov/swig.

Question (Inspections/Repairs12): Will there be any special provisions for 2020 ASR regarding cross connection testing (i.e. special tracking codes to denote lack of access/closures due to COVID-19).

Answer MassDEP provides a form for Public Water Supplier (PWS) to document any non-compliance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://www.mass.gov/media/2131936/download>). At a minimum, PWSs must prove that there has not been an intentional lapse in compliance; but that noncompliance was a result of issues resulting from COVID-19, such as staffing or contracting and laboratory resources outside of the facilities' control. In advance of the availability of the form, a PWS may document its action by responding to the questions listed below and submitting the documentation to its MassDEP Regional Drinking Water Program or to program.director-dwp@mass.gov. Subject: [Region] Covid-19 non-compliance justification.

The justification documentation must include the following information:

1. Date of Non-compliance
2. Nature of noncompliance: The violation as to which the PWS failed to monitor, report, test, or sample.
3. Identify how COVID-19 was the cause of the noncompliance
4. Steps taken to minimize the effects and duration of noncompliance

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5. Additional actions taken in response

6. Was return to compliance as soon as possible? Please explain.

7. If return to compliance was delayed or not possible, please explain and include the anticipated needed duration for compliance.

Question (Inspections/Repairs13): Will there be any accommodations made for testing reduced pressure backflow preventers devices once annually instead of the required twice annually? Relaxing the five-month separation in tests is helpful but we still foresee situations where two tests in one year are going to be a challenge due to lack of staff and a shortened timeframe.

Answer: The requirement is to conduct two Reduced Pressure Backflow Preventer (RPBP) tests in a year with a five-month separation between tests. The public water supplier is already able to choose to allow these tests to occur closer together. Therefore, the two RPBP tests could be conducted later this year. Failure to complete two RPBP tests in 2020 will be a violation; however, for RPBPs that are installed in facilities that have closed or where outside parties are not being granted access during the current emergency, the two times per year frequency of testing is changed this year only to one time per year except for RPBPs where the PWS is aware that the device is failing or if a water supply emergency occurs at the facility. Public water suppliers must maintain a list of every location and device where RPBP testing was reduced to one time per year during this emergency and the specific reason for the reduction (e.g. "Building closed from xx/xx/xxxx to xx/xx/xxxx due to COVID-19 emergency," or "Building inaccessible from xx/xx/xxxx to xx/xx/xxxx, see copy of notice received on xx/xx/xxx from facility owner"). This list with supporting documentation must also be submitted to MassDEP no later than 12/31/2020 at program.director-dwp@mass.gov, subject: Cross Connections. The Double Check Valve Assemblies (DCVA) test, required once per year, can be performed later in the year.

Question (Inspections/Repairs14): Will DEP be doing sanitary surveys?

Answer: We have suspended inspections for all but emergencies and imminent needs to ensure that infrastructure is working properly. We are working to ensure that our approach to resuming inspections is consistent with the Orders, the best public health information, and having proper protocols in place

Question (Inspections/Repairs15): I would ask that if and when priority testing becomes available that licensed backflow testers and surveyors are included. The nature of testing puts us in front of a varied and large group of folks daily.

Answer: We will work to be inclusive of the description of people working on the many aspects of water and wastewater operations and compliance.

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Question (Inspections/Repairs16): Do PWS have to conduct RPBP testing, normally conducted in the first part of the year? Is one test in this calendar year acceptable?

Answer: This question was previously answered. See answers to questions (Inspection/Repair9) and (Inspection/Repair13) .

Question (Inspections/Repairs17): If there is a non-responsive meter and the utility is trying to get in and replace that meter, but a resident homeowner is refusing to allow entrance to replace it, what is a utility supposed to do?

Answer: During the current pandemic, we understand that PWSs may have difficulty scheduling meter replacements due to resident or operator concerns for COVID-19. Old inaccurate meters do not allow a PWS to accurately bill customers and result in inefficiencies in utility operations to collect consumption data and revenue and should be replaced. We also understand that prior to the pandemic that PWS also had difficulty scheduling some meter replacements for a variety of reasons. PWS should continue to use the pre-COVID-19 procedures they developed to address this issue, that do not contravene the Governor's orders. These procedures may have included education and the use of local requirements and bylaws to provide estimated bills until the meter is replaced. We encourage PWS to work with other PWS that have successfully implement programs to encourage residents to replace meters. PWS may also find the information in the AWWA-Raftelis Report on Financial Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on U.S. Drinking Water Utilities useful: https://www.awwa.org/Portals/0/AWWA/Communications/AWWA-AMWA-COVID-Report_2020-04.pdf.

Question (Inspections/Repairs18): Could DEP provide guidance on changing out the filter in bottle filling stations when opening after COVID? With DEP providing facilities managers with recommendations on flushing building plumbing it might be pertinent to have them include a recommendation to change the filters in bottle filling stations after premise plumbing flushing has been completed.

Answer: MassDEP recommends building owners/operators remove point-of-use (POU) filters and replace them after flushing. This will limit the amount of sediment that could have been trapped during flushing and could be a potential source of contamination. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected or replaced before being used. Check with the manufacturer for details. This guidance applies to bottle filling stations. For more information regarding flushing see <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-building-flushing-information/download>.

Reporting

Question (Reporting1): Traditionally, mail/hand/faxed is the acceptable means of reporting. With its staff working remotely from home, what is MassDEP's expectations of reporting going forward? Will there be identified contacts to email the reports to in each region with the expectation a copy is also going in the mail as well? And if systems' administrators also have to work from home, will the mail-in requirement be temporarily lifted and email deemed acceptable until further notice? We want to make sure reporting still takes place and the appropriate people in each region are receiving it.

Answer: MassDEP already has been allowing certain reports to be emailed to program.director-dwp@mass.gov. We will expand this to all reports. The subject line should include the PWSID, City/Town and type of report (e.g. 3035000 Boston Bacteria Report). Continue to mail the official hardcopy to the appropriate MassDEP Regional office but indicate on the cover letter or similar enclosure that the report(s) was sent in via email and include the date of the email.

Question (Reporting2): Is the use of electronic signatures allowed?

Answer: Reports that are submitted via email during this emergency can be signed electronically. When the Public Water Supplier is able to access paper copies and the post office, it should also send hard copies of the reports through the mail.

Question (Reporting3): Can water system hand-deliver reports?

Answer: MassDEP offices are currently closed, but staff is working remotely and has made arrangements to process US mail deliveries. It is okay to mail reports or submit electronically through email or eDEP.

Question (Reporting4): Can MassDEP accept water quality laboratory reports electronically? Where can we electronically send Drinking Water reports?

Answer: MassDEP suggests that laboratories switch to using eDEP, which is available, for all the reports it can receive electronically. MassDEP staff has remote access to eDEP and is retrieving uploads daily.

To facilitate the receipt of water quality reports and other information that would otherwise be hand delivered or sent via the US Post Office the DWP will allow PWSs and Laboratories to make these submittals via email to program.director-dwp@mass.gov. PWSs and Laboratories will still be

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expected to mail an official copy of all such reports to the appropriate MassDEP regional office and should note in the cover letter or similar enclosure that the enclosed reports have been submitted via email.

Please start the subject with "[PWS ID#] [City/Town] [Type of Drinking Water Report]" for example: "3035000 Boston Bacteria Report."

The PWS should mail the official hardcopy to the appropriate MassDEP Regional office when it can access the post office but indicate on the cover letter or similar enclosure that the report(s) was sent in via email and include the date of the email.

Question (Reporting5): Are report submittals still due on the 10th of each month following the reporting period?

Answer: Yes. EPA has indicated that all such regulatory requirements remain in place. If you have a COVID related issue that will affect your ability to file, let MassDEP know.

Question (Reporting6): With DEP working remotely where can we electronically send information for the Well Driller Program?

Answer: The Drinking Water Program will be accepting all Well Driller Program applications and requests for information by email. Please send all mail to program.director-dwp@mass.gov : Subject Well Driller -[insert program area]. You may choose from the following list of program areas: New Driller Applications, Driller Recertification Applications, Well Completion Reports, Well Completion Report Correction Forms and Other/General information."

Question (Reporting7): I am wrapping up the CCR and completing Section F of the Certification form, "Good Faith Delivery Methods." We deliver to public places - City Hall, DPW, library, and schools and even though I can go and deliver to these places, they are closed to the public currently. So, can I still check off that they are posted in these public places?

Answer: Please use other Good Faith Efforts. For example, Public Service Announcement (PSA). EPA has been clear that all regulatory requirements must be met or a violation will be recorded. 310 CMR 22.06B (15) included examples of Good Faith Efforts:

The Community Water System must make a good faith effort to reach consumers who do not get water bills, and are required to take a minimum of three of the following actions:

- (a) Post report in the lobby of apartment complexes;
- (b) Place an ad in a local newspaper stating where copies are available;
- (c) Announce availability of the consumer confidence report on local radio stations;

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- (d) Post consumer confidence report in Town Hall;
- (e) Place copies of the consumer confidence report in the local public library;
- (f) Post a notice (in main lobby of apartment complexes) stating that the consumer confidence report is posted on a website, and give the website address;
- (g) Publish the report in local newspaper(s);
- (h) Deliver the report to community organizations.

Several of these options can be accomplished via mail/email. In addition, if there are local apartment complexes where you usually leave copies you could try to identify a building manager to whom you could mail copies (a) or a notice (e) for posting. Please contact your regional MassDEP or Boston office CCR staff for assistance.

Question (Reporting8): A lot of the good faith delivery options under the electronic delivery choice are not available currently due to the state's response to COVID-19. I cannot leave hard copies in the general areas, BOH, Library, Police Station nor Town Hall. We will have it up on the digital sign board and the notice will be on the bills. How do we fill out the delivery certification form? Will we be given dispensation if we cannot meet the total requirements of the good faith efforts portion?

Answer: See above answer and identify and use other Good Faith Methods. Keep in mind that the intent of good faith efforts is to reach non-billpaying consumers so a bill stuffer would not reach this audience. Please contact your regional MassDEP office or Boston CCR staff for assistance.

Question (Reporting9): I hand out Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs) and explain them when I survey businesses. Can that action be considered a good faith action by our water utility? Most of the folks I reach are employees in companies or folks that live in other towns.

Answer: It is a great idea to use every opportunity, including cross connection surveys, to educate the public about drinking water. MassDEP encourages you to continue to use your CCR for educational purpose. However, the intent of the CCR good faith effort is to distribute CCRs within the same timeframe that the CCRs are being delivered to bill-paying customers. If you are talking about cross-connection surveys you do over the course of 12 months, then that would not meet the good faith efforts. Please contact your MassDEP regional or Boston office CCR staff for assistance.

Question (Reporting10): Are digital sign boards considered a good faith effort for purposes of CCR?

Answer: Digital sign boards are a great way to educate the public about drinking water. However, how you use sign boards will determine if you have met the intent of the good faith efforts for CCR requirements. If you are using signboards in areas of heavy city/town traffic or other highly public areas with a URL to access a CCR, it could be considered a good faith effort. But, a plan for a

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stationary sign board that is attached to the water utility's building would not be considered a good faith effort, because it is not actively in the public eye and telling people where to access information. Please contact your MassDEP regional or Boston office CCR staff for assistance.

Question (Reporting11): What is required for proof of good faith effort for CCR?

Answer: See the Consumer Confidence Report Certification Form at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/consumer-confidence-report-certification-0/download>. You would simply describe what you did on the form, sign the certification section and submit the form to MassDEP. For example, if you used a mobile sign board, you could list the dates that you had the sign board(s) out and location(s) where they were placed.

Staffing and Licensure

Question (Staffing1): Can systems avoid receiving notices of non-compliance for staffing shortages if the facilities have SCADA systems in place?

Answer: Staffing shortage is a potential emergency that is required to be covered in existing emergency response plans under 310 CMR 22.03(13), for drinking water treatment facilities. MassDEP will work with systems that are confronting absences to help determine whether some remote operations may be sufficient during this emergency time period to substitute for some on-site practices and the conditions needed.

Question (Staffing2): What if operators at small systems are unavailable due to illness?

Answer: The use of substitute operators of the required grade or no less than one grade lower (e.g., as per the secondary operator requirements in 310 CMR 22.11B(2)(b) and (2)(d)) for the plant is already allowed as this would meet the direct responsible charge requirements while the primary operator is "temporarily absent." For other situations, MassDEP will review requests received from systems expeditiously.

Question (Staffing3): What can a system do if it does not have enough operators?

Answer: All water and wastewater treatment facilities should follow their existing Emergency Response Plan as it related to continuation of operations in the event of an emergency; these should include approved staffing plans. **If a facility anticipates not being able to meet required staffing requirements, the permittee should notify the MassDEP regional office** of this event and its expected duration and file for temporary emergency certification (see questions 5 and 6 below), if necessary. Regional staff can review and determine if staffing is sufficient and assist in developing contingencies, if possible.

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Question (Staffing4): For public water systems that require daily or weekly visits, will there be any leeway with limiting site visits or decreasing the number of visits required due to staffing issues or exposure to the public risks?

Answer: The certified operator or designated staff should only conduct visits to ensure safe drinking water priority tasks are accomplished, for example, sampling water quality and responding to water quality/equipment complaints. Visits that do not involve sampling are not required at this time. Contact MassDEP regional staff for assistance.

Question (Staffing5): What else can a system do to increase its number of operators?

Answer: Water and wastewater treatment facilities are encouraged to **join the Massachusetts Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (MAWARN.org)** to find licensed operators who may be able to help a system meet temporary staffing needs. Also, where staffing permits, systems should consider **cross-training other staff**. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority has offered assistance in conducting one-on-one sampler training.

Question (Staffing6): A lot of trainings have been cancelled or interrupted which could mean operators are not able to get the necessary contact hours to maintain their licenses. Can MassDEP and the Division of Professional Licensure extend deadlines for getting contact hours? Can MassDEP provide opportunities for online training?

Answer: MassDEP is currently considering options to host training classes online to make up for recent course cancellations, if needed. In addition, MassDEP will be consulting with DPL on identifying any authority to extend license terms.

Question (Staffing7): If an operator's family member is quarantined, should the public water system ask the operator to stay home too? What if an operator is required to sample at a facility where a case of coronavirus has been confirmed? Do we have any guidance on how to advise the public water system?

Answer: These situations will likely have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the facility based on available information and working with public health authorities.

Question (Staffing8): Is there any recommendation on staffing? Should we be splitting up our crews and licensed operators? Should we only be going out on emergency calls and for sampling?

Answer: MassDEP encourages and supports all actions to ensure the continuity of safe drinking water during this emergency period. Public water systems should take all actions they determine to be necessary to provide safe drinking water during this period and inform their MassDEP regional office of such plan/actions.

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Question (Staffing9): If communities or the state begin shelter in place, how can we assure contract operators (private companies) will be able to travel freely about to collect samples. Can Licensed Water Operators be deemed “essential” and able to travel regardless of whether they are a private entity? Who makes this determination?

Answer: On March 23, 2020, Governor Baker listed water system and wastewater system operations as essential functions.

Question (Staffing10): Can an Operator in Training (OIT) be granted full status to help fill in needs for operators?

Answer: MassDEP’s regulations allow for an OIT to act in this capacity during an emergency. Contact michael.maynard@mass.gov for more details.

Question (Staffing11): How can we get more licensed operators?

Answer: DEP has worked with the Division of Public Licensure to update the pathway for obtaining a Temporary Emergency Certification. This will enable a public water supplier to identify a potential operator, such as someone whose license has expired, recently retired, or someone who is already familiar with the facility, or is a professional engineer.

The public water system should complete the “Temporary Emergency Certification Application” <https://www.mass.gov/doc/temporary-emergency-certification-application-0/download> and email it to drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov with a cc to: michael.maynard@mass.gov and program.director-dwp@mass.gov. Subject: Temporary Emergency Certification Application. Also send a hard copy to address on the form.

Question (Staffing12): What steps should be taken if the operator’s license has recently expired?

Answer: DPL will be re-mailing notices to those operators who did not renew on 12/31/19 to remind them to do so.

The Division of Public Licensure and MassDEP will host a webinar on Friday, April 10 at 11:00 am to demonstrate how to renew online. Details of how to register will be included with the renewal letter and are presented below:

Visit <https://statema.webex.com/> and enter the meeting ID 618 091 880, and password “Water2020” to join.

Here is the tentative agenda for the meeting:

1. Introduction and Purpose

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2. Walk through the job-aid (Attached)
3. Open to Q&A

DPL isn't accepting paper renewals.

Operators who have any issues with on-line renewal should send an email to drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov and leave contact information so that DPL can call them back.

Question (Staffing13): Can we get fee relief from the Division of Public Licensure (DPL)?

Answer: DPL is not able to waive the licensing fees. However, it is able to - and will - waive late fees for those who renew their licenses now.

Question (Staffing14) For MA WARN, who is the acceptable signatory on the agreement?

Answer: MA WARN. MA WARN is a *voluntary* organization intended to provide mutual aid to water utilities during emergencies. Participation can be declined by a member for any particular emergency and withdrawal from MA WARN can be done at any time with notice to the group's representative.

Here is the MA WARN website: <http://portal.mawarn.org/Home.aspx>

Here is a general brochure about MA WARN: <http://portal.mawarn.org/Portals/0/MA-WARN%20Brochure%20Revised%20May%202010.pdf?ver=2017-04-24-100420-920>

SIGNATURE AUTHORITY TO BIND THE UTILITY. The person or persons authorized to sign and bind a public utility may not be the same for each system, so the first step in joining MA WARN would be identifying an authorized person to sign. This may be the board of commissioners for a utility, a DPW superintendent, water commissioner, city council or mayor or board of selectmen or town manager.

RELIEF UNDER STATE OF EMERGENCY. There has been no general declaration that changes or relieves any signatory requirements for municipal agreements, so in order to join MA WARN a signature on behalf of the utility is needed to demonstrate the utility's intention to join. MA WARN has published on its website a template for a utility to express its intent to join- but has not provided advice about electronic signatures. The template can be found here: <http://portal.mawarn.org/Portals/0/MA%20WARN%20FINAL%202007.pdf?ver=2017-04-24-100420-920> No signature block is reserved for MA WARN to accept the agreement.

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MassDEP's recommendation is to obtain a signature of an authorized person for your utility on the template membership agreement, and provide MA WARN with notice that the utility intends to join and has signed the membership agreement. Sending an electronic copy of the signed template form should serve as notice of the utility's intention to join. New England Water Works coordinates MA WARN membership, Please contact Kirsten King at 508-893-7979 or kirsten@NEWWA.org.

Question (Staffing15): How does a utility keep its plant online if a worker becomes ill from COVID-19?

Answer: The provision of drinking water is an essential public health service. If a public water system has an employee has become ill from COVID-19, it should work with its local Board of Health to determine how to decontaminate the workplace and continue operation.

Question (Staffing16): Water systems are shifting staffing schedules. Can DEP weigh in on in schedules?

Answer: A water supplier is encouraged to get in touch with its regional MassDEP office to describe any changes and review measures to ensure continuity of service.

Question (Staffing17): During the shelter at home, does a licensed operator need to be physically in the town of responsibility?

Answer: Since water and wastewater operators are deemed "essential," they should be free to travel to their workplaces. Also, a primary or secondary operator may use appropriate electronic tool to supervise staff.

Question (Staffing18): Do water and wastewater workers need to travel with their ID badges?

Answer: MassDEP recommends that water supply and wastewater staff travel with their ID badge

Question (Staffing19): If a water or wastewater operator is quarantined, can co-workers get prioritized for testing?

Answer: In such a circumstance, please be in immediate contact with your local health and emergency management officials to see what arrangements can be made for testing and follow-up measures.

Question (Staffing20): Are administrative and financial staff of water and wastewater utilities considered essential staff under Governor Baker's order of March 23, 2020 (Exhibit A)?

Answer: MassDEP has reviewed Exhibit A and discusses the question here. It should be noted that the Governor's Order encourages alternative work arrangements where possible. Where it isn't, these

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types of office and communication support functions appear to be covered in three different sections of Exhibit A:

Water and Wastewater

It includes “[e]mployees needed to operate and maintain public and private drinking water and wastewater/drainage infrastructure, including” and "operational staff, technical and support staff for SCADA systems and workers that maintain digital systems."

Public Works

Includes workers who "support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities and operations”, including water and sewer.

Other Community-Based Essential and Government functions

Includes "local" “employees who support Mission Essential Functions and communications networks” and “workers at operations centers necessary to maintain other essential functions.”

Question (Staffing21): I am concerned by the statements from the Rhode Island Governor about “closing the borders.” If I’m to continue operating, I cannot have some of my staff waylaid on their way to work.

Answer: Although the media reported that this was under consideration, the state of Rhode Island has not closed its borders.

Question (Staffing22): Can the 960-hour limitation for retirees in the state retirement system, as many DPW workers are, be waived for the duration of the emergency? The theory is many of these retirees would be working fulltime, perhaps for an extended period of time.

Answer: Governor Baker signed Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 into law on April 3, 2020 addressing this issue. See Section 14 of the law here:

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter53>.

Question (Staffing23): Are CORI forms required to be submitted with Temporary Emergency Certification applications?

Answer: Yes. The Division of Professional Licensure, which has the regulatory authority to issue the license, requires that the CORI form be attached to the Temporary Emergency Certification application. A link to the CORI form is located on the DPL website. If the TEC form is submitted

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without the CORI form, DPL will contact you. The board is currently meeting every week to expedite licensing.

Question (Staffing 24): When are the testing facilities opening (exam location for licensing)?

Answer: Operator Certification Exams prepared by the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) and are administered by PSI Services, LLC are closed until May 1, 2020 in Massachusetts. However, This situation is fluid so we will notify you if this changes.

Question (Staffing 25): Who should I contact if I have specific Board of Certification questions?

Answer: The best way to contact the Board of Certification is to email drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov.

Question (Staffing 26): Could you describe the Board's recent streamlining for reviewing and issuing Temporary Emergency Certifications (TECs)?

Answer: The Board voted on streamlined criteria to be applied to the review and consideration for approval of TEC applications. The TEC fee – as well as the late fee for renewal - now can be waived. The Board Chairman was authorized by the Board to review and approve TECs, as they are received, pending Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) review by the Division of Professional Licensure. The Chairman will report at each meeting of the Board on how many TEC applications were received, how many were approved and how many were denied. Following this streamlined Board approval, TECs will not be issued by DPL until the applicant's CORI and SORB are reviewed and determined to meet DPL criteria.

Question (Staffing 27): Can you give an update of the Board Review of Applications for Certification?

Answer: DPL informed the Board the division is developing procedures for review of applications remotely while protecting personal information such as Social Security numbers, telephone number and home addresses. As of the April 7, 2020 Board meeting DPL staff are not permitted to work in the office. Some staff can access the building on a grab and go basis. CORI and SORB review are also a big part of this effort.

To further build an available a pool of potential replacement operators should they be needed, it was decided by the Board, at the April 1, 2020 meeting, to work toward recalling operators who let their licenses lapse at the end of the last renewal cycle. The Board voted to allow operators whose licenses lapsed on December 31, 2019 to renew without having to meet the Training Contact Hours (TCH) requirement for licensure. Any operators who secures a renewal under this emergency provision will be required to bring their TCH's up to date by the end of the current renewal cycle which ends December 31, 2021.

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Also, DPL informed the Board that following the April 1, 2020 Board meeting, DPL made an effort to contact the operators of approximately 500 licenses that lapsed December 31, 2019 to inform this targeted group that a webinar was being held on Friday April 10, 2020 to inform operators, of this set of lapsed licenses, of the need and opportunity to renew under and the way in which to apply to receive renewed licenses.

Question (Staffing 28): Is there an update on the survey that MassDEP implemented to identify operators who are willing to provide services to fulfill staffing shortages at facilities?

Answer: MassDEP received 41 responses, of which 24 are complete. This includes 21 drinking water operators and 3 wastewater operators. We have information on the types of licenses that the operators have and which DEP region they would prefer to work in. We are following up with the other 17 operators to get missing information. We will post results of the survey on MassDEP's website and can make this information directly available to public water suppliers from michael.maynard@mass.gov.

Question (Staffing 29): We have two operators who need to sit for exams to be licensed – I told the person the test centers are (right now) set to open on May 1st. When will exams restart?

Answer: The Governor extended State of Emergency until May 18th. The exam provider will follow the requirements of local and state government with respect to opening. We will inform you when the exam sites are scheduled to be open.

Question (Staffing 30): Will the Board issue Temporary Emergency Certifications (TEC) for operators who aren't able to take the exams because the test sites are closed? Assuming the system already has licensed operators, will TEC's be granted for other employees?

Answer: The public water system should submit the TEC with that individual's name on it, and their experience. The Board will review each individual TEC application based on its merits and make a determination. If a person cannot take the exam, and a public water system wants to put them on a TCE, the public water system should submit the TEC application to DPL at drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov with a cc: to michael.maynard@mass.gov and program.director-dwp@mass.gov. The fee for TEC applications has been waived by DPL.

Question (Staffing 31): What is the status of the request to the DPL Board for upgrades from Operator-in-Training to full operators?

Answer: The Board and DPL have now established a secure location for all applications and upgrades that are received. The purpose of the secure location is so that all applications can be reviewed

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remotely by the Board. Currently, there are several applications that are in queue, based on the date of receipt, for review and determination.

Question (Staffing 32): Since MassDEP will be issuing violations for adjustments in sampling plans or potentially missed samples due to closures or operator safety and health concerns related to COVID-19, will the Division of Professional Licensure be reprimanding or punishing operators for any of these violations?

Answer: This is a question for the Division of Professional Licensure (DPL). Case specific questions for DPL Drinking Water Board should be emailed to drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov. Board council reviewed this question and replied that all complaints will be referred to the Board for review to determine if an investigation is warranted.

Question (Staffing 33): What types of people could be put forward to the Board as temporary operators?

Answer: See Question (Staffing 11). Examples include engineers who may have experience running that exact treatment plant or persons with expired licenses. Each superintendent knows their system best and if they determine a candidate would appropriately operate their facility, then they should apply to the Board for that person to receive a Temporary Emergency Certificate (TEC). The public water system should complete the "Temporary Emergency Certification Application" at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/temporary-emergency-certification-application-0/download> and email it to drinkingwaterboard@mass.gov with a cc to: michael.maynard@mass.gov and program.director-dwp@mass.gov. Subject: Temporary Emergency Certification Application. Also send a hard copy to the address on the form.

Question (Staffing 34): Will TCH requirements for license renewal be reduced because so many training conferences are cancelled?

Answer: This question is currently under discussion by the DPL Board. However, the Board has approved and continues to approve on-line trainings for TCH credit.

Question (Staffing 35): Is DPL still processing regular license upgrade applications?

Answer: Yes. DPL is processing regular license upgrade applications. DPL has been transitioning to remote processing as their offices are closed.

Question (Staffing 36): Are testing sites allowing operators to schedule exams for when they reopen? Is there a backlog at the testing sites because exams had to be rescheduled due to the closing of the sites?

Answer: Operators may schedule exams now that the sites are open. We are unaware of any backlog but will check with examiners (ABC and PSI).

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Safety and Planning

Question (Safety/Planning1): There is no response from regional state drinking water staff.

Answer: Call the MassDEP 24-hour emergency line 888-304-1133.

Question (Safety/Planning2): The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states, “Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>).” However, there are public water systems in Massachusetts that do not disinfect or filter their water. Is this water safe to drink or touch?

Answer: If the water is tested and meets drinking water standards, people can drink water from their tap as usual. There have been no known detections of coronavirus in water supplies (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “the presence of the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies and based on current evidence the risk to water supplies is low.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a website with its most up-to-date information on COVID-19 and drinking water, which can be found here:

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>.

Question (Safety/Planning3): Is there COVID-19 guidance for owners of private wells?

Answer: Homeowners with private wells who are concerned about pathogens such as viruses in drinking water may consider approaches that remove bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens, including certified home treatment devices (<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>).

Question (Safety/Planning4): Does MEMA arrange for personal protective equipment this type of emergency?

Answer: There is a shortage of PPE at this time. MassDEP has raised this issue based on your comments at the state level. Facilities should also be in contact with your local emergency management officials to identify PPE needs. DEP will send any updated information it receives.

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Question (Safety/Planning5): Can COVID-19 be detected in a bacteria test?

Answer: We are not aware of any direct test for SARS-CoV-2/coronavirus in drinking water.

Question (Safety/Planning6): Any additional guidance for best practices?

Answer: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed this COVID-19 planning guidance based on traditional infection prevention and industrial hygiene practices. It focuses on the need for employers to implement engineering, administrative, and work practice controls and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as considerations for doing so.

This guidance is intended for planning purposes. Employers and workers should use this planning guidance to help identify risk levels in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement. Additional guidance may be needed as COVID-19 outbreak conditions change, including as new information about the virus, its transmission, and impacts, becomes available.

OSHA 3990-03 2020: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19:

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

Question (Safety/Planning7): Should we plan for longer than April?

Answer: We will all be monitoring health information and directives as we move forward through this emergency. We encourage and appreciate the work public water systems are doing to plan for a variety of scenarios, including extension of the current emergency period, in their drinking water Emergency Response Plans.

Question (Safety/Planning8): Water and wastewater professionals should be eligible for priority COVID-19 testing.

Answer: MassDEP has raised this issue to the Command Center.

Question (Safety/Planning9): There are public water systems that are municipally owned, and then there are public water systems that are privately owned. There are several large private water companies in the state. With a possible issuance of PPE by the federal government, we are hoping that both municipal public water systems and private public water systems will be eligible to receive supplies. Any clarification?

Answer: All utilities are eligible - both publicly and privately owned.

Question (Safety/Planning10): We need gloves, in addition to masks.

Answer: MassDEP will be posting a PPE and Supplies Needs Survey for all Public Water Systems (PWS) and Wastewater Utilities on its website to better articulate the needs of operators. Also,

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MassDEP continues to coordinate on this issue with the MEMA Command Center and the federal government.

Question (Safety/Planning11): Is there guidance from the state on PPE?

Answer: The Commonwealth has listed Guidance for requesting, distributing, prioritizing, and optimizing use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Massachusetts during the COVID-19 response. See: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-during-covid-19>.

Question (Safety/Planning12): Can DW/WW systems get notifications from public health authorities on whether or not somebody has COVID-19 in the buildings needed to access for sampling or servicing?

Answer: Health information is shared with health safety and first responders but is not able to be shared more broadly than that.

Building Guidance

Question (Building1): CDC has distributed guidance on how to get buildings back up and going after the pandemic, but what about facilities like schools that do currently have a couple of staff working, but don't nearly have the usage that they would otherwise, what is the guidance for those facilities where there may be people drinking the water while the facility is closed, should they be doing any sort of flushing internally?

Answer: MassDEP has provided information on Building Flushing Information for Public Water Suppliers for use after buildings have been shut down or used less frequently. See <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-building-flushing-information/download>. For information for schools on mitigating lead and copper levels after school closure see Question (Inspections/Repairs5) at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/lead-and-copper-best-practices/download>. In addition, Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) "start-up" procedures for systems have been provided in the MassDEP Frequently Asked Questions at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-covid-19-faqs-for-public-water-suppliers-0/download>.

Question (Building2): Should there be concerns about stagnant water in buildings where the water has not been running? What about schools, large employers, etc.?

Answer: Stagnant water conditions can result in discolored water, lower chlorine levels, higher concentrations of lead and copper and even the proliferation of legionella, under certain building conditions. Fresh water should be drawn into the building water systems and stagnant water flushed

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out before the buildings are re-opened or if the facility was using a reduced flow, prior to returning to typical water use. The Drinking Water Program has provided guidance on how to re-open the water system in building /facilities that have been closed or had no or low flow.

Question (Building3): Does Massachusetts have guidance on building flushing?

Answer: The guidance is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-building-flushing-information>. It includes a link to EPA's guidance. Owners/operators for building or facilities that have been closed or have little to no flow must flush out stagnant water and follow all other requirements before re-opening or returning to typical water use. At a minimum, flushing should be unidirectional, starting with fully opening the tap closest to the entry point of the building's distribution system and moving through the building to the most distant tap. For systems with a disinfection residual, make sure that the residual in the building is the same as the residual in the water main. All equipment that use water should also be flushed out according to manufactures' specifications. For important and necessary details on flushing review the above noted guidance.

Question (Building4): Q: Will the state be pushing out the flushing guidance to property owners and managers directly?

Answer: Yes. MassDEP has sent out its guidance through a variety of organizations. The organization will include MFAA- Massachusetts Facility Administrators' Association, NAIOP - Massachusetts Commercial Real Estate Development Association, Greater Boston Real Estate Board, etc.

Laboratory Services

Question (Lab1): I have had questions from multiple utilities on how or whether the labs will operate with the quarantine? Will you or do you have special conditions for sample drop off?

Answer: At this time the labs that have shared their status with MassDEP have indicated that they remain open for business but may have instituted new procedures for sample delivery and drop off. PWSs should contact their lab regularly and confirm whether they need to modify any of their routine practices. Labs can contact MassDEP's Wall Experiment Station for guidance on sample drop-off.

Question (Lab2): Laboratories seem to be concerned about being open and having adequate staffing. How will DEP deal with this if our hired labs are closed?

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Answer: Staff in laboratories conducting analyses for water and wastewater systems are considered “essential.” If a public water supplier is concerned that its lab might closed because of a shortage of staff, it should identify alternative labs now that could perform the required analyses.

Chemicals and Other Supplies

Question (Supplies1): What if there is a shortage of necessary chemicals? For example, there is a 10-day backlog for sodium hydroxide. Can MassDEP issue a temporary inactivation of certain treatment for water or wastewater systems if chemicals are not available?

Answer: The drinking water regulations at 310 CMR 22.03(13) include “depletion of treatment chemical inventory” as a potential emergency for which existing emergency response plans shall include “detailed steps that the water supplier shall implement to ensure the continuation of service.”

MassDEP acknowledges that in some cases selected treatment could be suspended due to shortages that are outside the control of the public water system and for which no other source of supply can be identified.

MassDEP wants to know what chemicals are most in short supply. If you are concerned that your system is or may be running out of chemicals in the near future, please notify MassDEP at once. MassDEP will work with federal and state authorities to see if we can help address such a shortage. But timely notification is essential to avoid disruption.

Question (Supplies2): What if a public water system cannot purchase sodium fluoride, which is only available from China? Can MassDEP issue waivers to public water systems that cannot obtain sodium fluoride?

Answer: The drinking water regulations at 310 CMR 22.03(13) include “depletion of treatment chemical inventory” as a potential emergency for which existing emergency response plans shall include “detailed steps that the water supplier shall implement to ensure the continuation of service.” If a public water system is unable to obtain fluoride for its system, it must contact the Department of Public Health (Fluoridation Coordinator is Heather Benabbou at Heather.Benabbou@state.ma.us) and provide 1) the water supplier's name and contact information; 2) affected areas; 3) the anticipated date it will run out of fluoride; 4) the anticipated duration without fluoride; and 5) the fluoride supplier name. When this is done, the water system should then notify the MassDEP regional office that it has done so.

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Question (Supplies3): Some water systems are ordering way more chemicals than they would normally need, and other suppliers are concerned about this. Water systems should be planning chemical usage and not “hoarding.”

Answer: MassDEP strongly discourages hoarding of supplies as this could result in a shortage of supplies impacting the operations of many systems. We encourage you to coordinate with neighboring facilities if you do have ample supplies.

Question (Supplies4): Can we get Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer for employees working on maintenance from a state supply?

Answer: We will share information on this issue when it becomes available.

Question (Supplies5): Has the state heard anything about supply chain issues with liquid oxygen supplies with prioritization for healthcare facilities? Ozone disinfection facilities can be affected.

Answer: Some wastewater systems have been notified by providers that they will need start to think about managing demand based on the increase demand of oxygen as a result of COVID-19. MassDEP is following up on this topic but currently we are not aware of any system at risk of running out of supplies right now. Systems are urged to notify MassDEP if they are at risk of running out of oxygen or any other needed chemical.

Service

Question (Service1): Last Tuesday on the DEP conference call someone alluded to the fact that we cannot legally deny someone water service because we are not going into homes during the pandemic. We have a property that has been vacant for some time, and now has a resident moving in. The water meter was removed by our staff several years ago and stored at our water shop. To activate their service, we would need to enter the home, which we have been avoiding except for emergency calls during the pandemic. Can anyone verify if it is true that we must go turn on the water to this property?

Answer: MassDEP regulations do not require public water suppliers to connect a previously vacant home. More broadly, MassDEP regulations do not contain requirements regarding when a public water supplier must provide water to a home. MassDEP recommends that municipal public water suppliers consult their city or town counsel as to whether there are any local ordinances, bylaws or other rules that address this issue under local authority. Public water suppliers that are regulated by the Department of Public Utilities should also consult DPU regulations, tariffs and any orders or directives to determine if there are DPU rules that apply.

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Question (Service2): Can customers' water be shutoff for a few hours right now to allow water main work to proceed or has the government prohibited that?

Answer: Water is an essential service. Temporarily shutting off service to some customers to perform maintenance or add new service connections is a typical procedure for which there are normal protocols that include notification to impacted customers and for timing the temporary service interruption to minimize customer impact. Public water systems implementing their normal protocol for temporary maintenance service shutoffs should be cognizant of how the COVID-19 stay-at-home advisory might change consumers daily water use and system demand patterns. Contact your regional DEP program for assistance.

Funding

Question (Funding1): Are there funds available for COVID-19 expenses?

Answer: In the event funds are made available through FEMA or other sources, it will be helpful to track expenditures. Sheets to track expenses provided by MEMA are located here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/fema-3438-em-ma-covid-19-emergency-declaration> MEMA has sent out the information through its list service. DPH linked to the MEMA announcement and sent it to their list services, which included municipal partners. .

Question (Funding2): Can you please provide an update on plan for finalizing the Clean Water Intended Use Plans that will be financed through the Clean Water SRF loan Program. Particularly regarding the Asset Management Planning Grants, do you anticipate any effects on the timeline or procedural changes for the June 30th Appropriation of Local Funds, October 16th Financing Application deadline, or any other program changes?

Answer: The comment period on the Intended Use Plan closed on March 16, 2020 and MassDEP is working to finalize the IUP. MassDEP and the Clean Water Trust have issued the following statement:

Due to protocols put in place by the State of Massachusetts in response to the COVID-19 emergency, MassDEP and the Clean Water Trust are working remotely during this time. Both agencies are fully functional and the day to day operations continue to assist borrowers in funding their projects.

We have heard from many communities concerned about their ability to hold town meetings or sign contracts due to availability of construction materials and the uncertainty of the impact the COVID-19 emergency will have on project costs.

Additional Subsidy for 2019 IUP

In response, MassDEP and the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust (the Trust) have extended the deadline to qualify for additional subsidy for eligible borrowers in the 2019 Intended Use Plan for both the Clean Water and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs. **Additional subsidy will be disbursed over construction contracts that are executed by August 14, 2020.** This 45-day extension will be reassessed and may be further extended if so required. MassDEP and the Trust remain committed to work with borrowers during these challenging times to ensure SRF financed projects are implemented in order to protect public health and the environment.

Local Authorization for 2020 Intended Use Plan (IUP)

The final IUPs, when published, will state that to be considered for funding priority, **communities must have appropriated the necessary local project funds or have committed to a schedule to obtain those funds by October 16, 2020.** This deadline will allow for communities to plan for a town meeting in the fall in time to submit the complete SRF loan application.

For questions please contact:

Maria Pinaud, Division Director for Municipal Services at MassDEP
Maria.Pinaud@mass.gov

Nathaniel Keenan, Deputy Director, Massachusetts Clean Water Trust
nkeenan@tre.state.ma.us

Question (Funding 3): Section 10, Chapter 53 of Acts of 2020 prohibits the shutoff of water service until June 30, 2020. However, Section 11 discusses interest charges but states “may” waive the payment of interest. Must the interest be waived or may it be waived?

Answer: Section 11 states (with emphasis added):

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“[T]he Chief Executive Officer of a city or town . . . or the prudential committee or commissioners of a district may waive the payment of interest and other penalty in the event of late payment of any excise, tax, betterment assessment or apportionment thereof, water rate or annual sewer use or other charge added to a tax for any payments with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 and made after its respective due date but before June 30, 2020, if the nonpayment resulted from a demonstrated inability to pay due to circumstances related to the outbreak of COVID-19 or the governor’s March 10, 2020 declaration of a state of emergency; provided that the inability to pay shall include a demonstrated financial hardship of a resident, which may include, but not be limited to, loss of employment, serious illness of someone within the home or death of someone within the home.”

Our General Counsel’s Office notes (as the question itself did) that the language of Section 11 uses the phrase “may waive” for any late payments on bills that were due “on or after March 10th”, with the conditions: (1) a resident must demonstrate an “inability to pay” due to COVID-19; and (2) the provision applies to payments received before June 30, 2020

Question (Funding 4): We have given a directive by the Town Administrator that we are to cease expenditures without his approval on anything other than payroll, utilities and contractual obligations. I am not sure this is going to ensure a reliable, sustainable, nor safe water system. Can this be addressed to the Commissioner since DEP has primacy on this? Departments on the enterprise system are set up to be self-sustaining in times like this and we are going to need to perform things that will entail costs.

Answer: If a public water system is confronting an issue that affects its obligations under federal and state drinking water laws and regulations, the first step will be to reach out to its MassDEP Regional Office so we can get a better understanding of what the issues are. We would need to know if there is a particular function that the PWS is not able to perform.

Question (Funding 5): Is there any news or updates on how FEMA/MEMA may be handling reimbursement of costs (if allowed) for water/wastewater systems?

Answer: MassDEP will work with the MEMA Command Center to get the latest information. Here is a link to FEMA’s COVID-19 reimbursement webpage: <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/23/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-public-assistance-simplified-application>.

Question (Funding 6): Will there be a stimulus? What projects will be allowed? How will we apply for them?

Answer: MassDEP understands that this emergency will affect systems’ revenues over the long-term. MassDEP has heard that national water advocacy groups have been working with Congress to address

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these issues but does not have direct knowledge of this work. We are researching opportunities for input for sectors to be addressed in the next stimulus package.

Question (Funding 7): One of the speakers during yesterday’s DR-4496 COVID-19 Pandemic Application briefing mentioned that the 2 hours attending the briefing was a reimbursable expense. It follows that the attendance and participation in the weekly MassDEP COVID-19 briefings would be FEMA reimbursable expenses for water and wastewater personnel. Should water and wastewater personnel keep a record of their attendance at these briefings and submit their time, along with other COVID-19 expenses, to FEMA through their municipality or district?

Answer: MassDEP recommends that water and wastewater personnel keep track of all COVID-19 related expenses. However, FEMA makes the final decisions on what is reimbursable.

Question (Funding 8): Can there be direction on how to fill out the MEMA needs spreadsheets that support reimbursement under the FEMA COVID-19 Federal Disaster Declaration?

Answer: There is a lot of information on the COVID-19 Federal Disaster Declaration here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-federal-disaster-declaration>, including a “Questions” section which is portal to submit questions to MEMA. MEMA checks this site and ensures all questions are answered. Please follow this link to go directly to the question form: https://massgov.formstack.com/forms/em3438_declaration_fema_pa_questions. Also, MEMA recently held applicant briefings to provide guidance on filling out the reimbursement forms. MEMA will post the recordings, slides, and Q&As shortly.

Additional Information

Question (AdditionalInfo1): What actions should water and wastewater system operators take to address the Coronavirus?

Answer: There are several best practices that operators can adopt to minimize interruption of services as well as illness of employees. These include:

Review your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) with staff, with a focus on the pandemic/communicable disease section. Update as necessary to ensure continuity of operations in the event a staff member or members become affected and must quarantine. Remember, a shortage

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or lack of resources that could affect operations of your system is considered an emergency under 310 CMR 22.04(13).

Participate in mutual aid programs! Being a member of MAWARN and/or the statewide mutual aid programs will be of value if you need to call upon other communities' resources for assistance. **If you are not part of any mutual aid program, you can access the forms at these links:**

- **MAWARN** – Massachusetts Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network download the application at www.mawarn.org and submit to Kirsten King at NEWWA.
- **Statewide Mutual Aid** - <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/intrastate-mutual-aid>

Reach out to your neighboring utilities to see what they may be doing to plan. Good communication before an event is key to response and recovery. If neighboring utilities are not members of MAWARN or other mutual aid, encourage them to join.

Check in with your chemical suppliers and other critical vendors to see if any deliveries may be impacted and what you can do to ensure you have enough supply through advance purchases. Check in with other key suppliers for status on materials.

Fuel your service vehicles and generators. Equip your vehicles with cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment.

Encourage all employees to get the flu shot if they have not done so already as this helps to boost your immune system. It's not too late!

Curtail interactions; practice "social distancing."

Question (AdditionalInfo2): Where can I find information for the water and wastewater industries?

Answer: Below are links to helpful resources for the **water and wastewater industries**:

MassDEP Forms for a Drinking Water Temporary Emergency Certification of Provisional Certification

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- <https://www.mass.gov/lists/operators-of-drinking-water-supply-facilities-applications-and-forms>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Guidance on Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater

- <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>

American Water Works Association

- <https://www.awwa.org/AWWA-Articles/coronavirus-and-water>

Water Environmental Federation

- <https://www.wef.org/news-hub/wef-news/the-water-professionals-guide-to-the-2019-novel-coronavirus/>

WaterISAC, a membership organization and international security network created by and for the water & wastewater sector:

- <https://www.waterisac.org/>
- <https://www.waterisac.org/portal/business-continuity-planning-event-influenza-pandemic-reference-guide>

WaterOnline-Coronavirus-What Treatment Professionals Need To Know

- <https://www.wateronline.com/doc/coronavirus-and-the-water-cycle-here-is-what-treatment-professionals-need-to-know-0001>

Stantec article

- <https://ideas.stantec.com/water/coronavirus-and-the-water-cycle-here-is-what-treatment-professionals-need-to-know>

Question (AdditionalInfo3): Where can I find more general information?

Answer: Below are additional links to helpful resources:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus>

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- “Top 10 List Pandemic and Natural Disasters Notebook” (being updated now; tips are still relevant, but some links are outdated):
<https://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/drinkwater/pdfs/TopTenFlu.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

MA Department of Public Health (MDPH)

- <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Question (Additional Info4): MassDEP is holding regularly scheduled calls with public water supplies, will there be a similar phone call to discuss wastewater operation questions?

Answer: MassDEP is hosting similar calls with the wastewater industry.

Question (Additional Info6): Where can we get the latest information from EPA and MassDEP on COVID-19?

Answer: Check for the latest information from EPA here:

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>.

Check for the latest information from MassDEP here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdep-covid-19-resources-for-water-suppliers-and-wastewater-operators>

Question (Additional Info7): Where can I get FEMA forms and other useful information?

Answer: EPA’s Water Utility Response On-The-Go Mobile Application has a lot of useful information for water utility operators, including FEMA forms: <https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/water-utility-response-go-mobile-application>.

Question (Additional Info8): What materials have MassDEP developed for water suppliers in response to COVID?

Answer: List of developed tools on-line at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdep-covid-19-resources-for-water-suppliers-and-wastewater-operators#water-supplier-resources->

- Start-up Activities Checklist for Non-Community and small water systems that have closed due to a State of Emergency - Recommended checklist (New)
- Form for documenting non-compliance due to covid-19 (New)

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- Hydrant monitoring
- Spigot monitoring
- Emergency Certification Form for Non-community PWS temporary closure due to covid-19
- For schools- mitigating lead and copper levels after school closures
- Results of operator sharing survey.
- FAQs
- Information on Flushing after closure or low flow
- Survey on number of employees for PPE (cloth masks)

In development:

- Expanded survey on PPE/Chemical use
- Information for PWS on protective measures
- Preparation for sanitary surveys - In-house survey of experiences we have had conducting remote surveys to assist in developing remote survey/inspection and site visit tools