

Manitoba Operators Managing under COVID-19

Webinar

April 17, 2020 3:00 pm

Conservation and Climate



Overview

1. **Business Continuity Plan – Continuing Services**
2. **COVID-19**
3. **Regulatory Responsibilities**
 - A. **Certification**
 - B. **Drinking Water**
 - C. **Wastewater and Solid Waste**
4. **Seasonal Systems**

Business Continuity Plans

- The [World Health Organization](#) defines an emergency as the state in which normal procedures are interrupted, and immediate measures need to be taken to prevent that state from turning into a disaster
- Business Continuity Plan
 - Is the process of creating systems of prevention and recovery to deal with potential threats to a company. The goal is to enable ongoing operations during and after a disaster.

Business Continuity Plans

- Inventory
 - Equipment, Supplies, Suppliers
 - Locations (work, routine sampling)
 - Standard Operating Procedures
- Analysis
 - What is the impact?
 - What is the threat?
 - Develop scenarios and work out solutions
 - commercial transportation disruption
 - Operator drives samples to Lab

Business Continuity Plans

- Business Impact
- *Each function typically relies on a combination of components*
 - Operators (full time, part time, contractors) and certification
 - SCADA systems (full remote operation, limited operation)
 - Physical assets (cell phones, laptops)
 - Daily tests and report submissions
 - Operating licence conditions

Business Continuity Plans

- WRF/EPA/AWWA Business Continuity Plans for Water Utilities

<https://www.waterisac.org/system/files/Business%20Continuity%20Planning%20for%20Water%20Utilities.pdf>

- Additional Resources from AWWA

<https://www.awwa.org/Resources-Tools/Resource-Topics/Coronavirus>

- Government of Canada: A Guide to Business Continuity Planning

https://www.gov.mb.ca/emo/pdfs/bcont_e.pdf

- Emergency Response and Contingency Planning for Small Water Systems – BC

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/healthy-communities/ercp-sws-final-july-14-2016.pdf>

Continuing Services

Standard operating procedures

- Who benefits from SOPs?
 - Everyone who works in your water supply
- Ensure SOPs are up-to-date!
- Review SOPs with all staff regularly!
 - That includes full time staff, management, new operators or neighbouring operators

Continuing Services

Critical chemicals and parts

- Take stock!
- List critical chemicals and equipment
- Purchase enough for 3 to 6 months
- Don't forget test reagents
- Communicate with neighbours, determine compatible chemicals, equipment and reagents
- Remember to clean and calibrate!!

Continuing Services

Planned maintenance

At this time, non-critical maintenance in the water treatment or distribution system that may or could result in a boil water advisory being issued should be postponed to avoid stress and confusion to water system users.

Operators must continue to report emergencies!

Continuing Services

Should I close my bulk fill station?

Can the water system be shut off?

No – bulk fill stations should be considered an extension of your distribution system. Water supplies are essential for consumption, hygienic purposes and fire suppression. They should not be shut down. Contact your Drinking Water Officer if you have concerns with the safety of your water supply.

Continuing Services

– Flood preparedness <https://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/floodinfo/index.html>

Historically, some municipal and town office have provided supplies for private well owners to sample their wells for bacteriological parameters following a flooding event.

Additionally, certain municipalities have also acted as a sample drop-off centres and coordinated the shipping of the private well samples to the laboratory.

Please consider to continue to provide these services in the case of flooding this year, keeping in mind recommended COVID-19 practices, including hygiene and social distancing.

Reminder to Report: In the event that your secure well water supply is impacted by flood water.

COVID-19

- How effective is disinfection against COVID-19?

The COVID-19 virus appears to be less stable in the environment and more susceptible to oxidants such as chlorine when compared to other enteric viruses. The COVID-19 virus is likely to become inactivated significantly faster than enteric viruses.

Just a reminder that all disinfectants used in the water treatment plant must be NSF certified

COVID-19

- Can the water supply be contaminated?

COVID-19 is not a waterborne disease and there has been no evidence to date that the virus can be transmitted through drinking water. Operators going into water plants should continue to keep the water plant clean and tidy and follow hygienic practices (handwashing and cough etiquette). Water plants should remain closed to public entry.

COVID-19

- My water supply is under advisory, is it safe for hand washing?

Yes, washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds is effective at inactivating the virus.

COVID-19

- Can I operate the water system under self-isolation?

If an operator is sick or self-isolating, please employ a backup operator for daily routine monitoring. Operators self isolating can still oversee plant operations through remote SCADA control.

Operators are not required to be certified to take chlorine residual testing or bacteriological samples. Certified operators are required for filling day tanks, changing chemical doses, maintenance etc.

Owners are encouraged to connect with neighbouring communities for sharing of operators as needed.

COVID-19

- Do my operators need to be sequestered?

There is no need to sequester operators at this time; however, the situation is rapidly changing. You are advised to check <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html> daily for up-to-date information and update your emergency response or business continuity plans accordingly.

- AWWA webinar on COVID-Communication

<https://www.gotostage.com/channel/16921d7cb152490e82f25f5163c66f15/recording/62873b1374a04135964d26b934246ce4/watch>

- WEF Pandemic Continuity of Operations (COOP) Essential Personnel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fR8hYD6QwwQ>

- Water Quality and Health Council: Can you get Coronavirus from wastewater or drinking water?

https://waterandhealth.org/safe-drinking-water/drinking-water/can-you-get-coronavirus-from-wastewater-or-drinking-water/?utm_campaign=perspectives&utm_source=email&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=coronavirus-drinking-water

- WRF: Coronavirus Research Update

<https://www.waterrf.org/event/coronavirus-research-update>

- Other Canadian jurisdictions: QC & BC

<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/publications/2939-drinking-water-wastewater-treatment-plant-workers-covid19>

http://www.vch.ca/Documents/HealthProtection_Water%20Systems_Message.pdf

A. Regulatory Responsibilities

Certification

- Identify backup operators;
- Review and update emergency response plans;
- Review and update standard operating procedures; and
- Consider making reciprocal arrangements with neighboring facilities to share operators
- *Memorandum of Understanding to share operators*

https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/about/articles-and-publications/index.html?wg=waste_management&term=share_cert

A. Regulatory Responsibilities

Certification

- **Conditional Certificates** [owners must apply]
 - Operators who did not meet the renewal requirements for continuing education;
 - Operators who are experienced but are short of the required experience for full certification;
 - Operators who have not yet passed the certification examination;
 - Operators who are recently retired or have moved to other careers that did not require maintenance of their certification;
 - Other

A. Regulatory Responsibilities

Certification

- The Department can accept and process applications from facility owners for conditional certification under Section 19 of The Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation.
- Owners who intend to apply for conditional certification or have questions about their specific situation should email wwopcert@gov.mb.ca
- The Manitoba Water and Wastewater Association has offered to match operators able to volunteer with facilities that experiencing a shortage of operators. Please email mwwaoffice@shaw.ca

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water



- Access to Drinking Water Officers

Regional Drinking Water Officers remain available to owners and operators via normal communication modes such as phone and emails. We are not anticipating any interruptions to our services and it is business as usual for permits, licences, audits etc.

For the next few weeks, routine inspections have been postponed in keeping with social distancing requirements. Meetings with stakeholders have been or will be rescheduled to teleconference calls during this time.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water



- Expectations for monitoring and reporting

There is no change to routine monitoring and reporting requirements at this time. Routine bacteriological samples, disinfection, turbidity monitoring and reporting must be consistent with your operating licence. Failure to monitor and report as required may result in a boil water advisory. Operators are reminded of their emergency reporting requirements and the need to contact your Drinking Water Officer during business hours or ERT at

1-855-944-4888 after hours.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water

- Changes to monthly report submissions

Operators are to send the monthly reports via fax, scanned copy or a clear photograph can be emailed/texted to your regional Drinking Water Officer instead of mailing the original form

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water

- Non-critical, non-essential submissions

The Office of Drinking Water will consider extensions for

- non-critical chemistry analysis such as disinfection by-products
- non-essential report submission such as the Annual Water System Report, compliance plans, and Advisory Notification Plan updates (not first submissions) on a site specific basis.

Contact your Drinking Water Officer to arrange extensions.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water

- Should I raise my chlorine residuals during this time?

There is no need for higher disinfection residuals as long as they are within your normal range and you are meeting your licence requirements. However, if you wish to increase them, the Office of Drinking Water suggests dosing 0.1 to 0.2 mg/L higher than normal after contact time to possibly maintaining 0.2 mg/L free chlorine at all points in the distribution system.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water

- How do I take distribution samples when I normally take them from peoples homes?

Operators that collect bacteriological samples from residential kitchen taps can move the sample location to an outside tap. Residents can be contacted to turn on the outside tap prior to sampling. The preferred tap location is the one closest to the water entering the home. Be careful of landscaping, remove grass, cobwebs, etc., from the tap area. Turn the tap on, flush for 2 to 5 minutes, directing the water away from the house. Turn tap off, use a clean paper towel to dry, then flame or disinfect the tap using your normal technique. Collect sample. The homeowner can then be directed to close off the tap as required.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Drinking Water

- If normal shipping routes are disrupted, how do I get samples to the Laboratory?

Bacteriological testing is one of the most critical indicators to ensure the safety of your drinking water supply. Should your normal shipping routes be disrupted during this time, you as a water supplier are required to get water samples to the laboratory in the frequency specified in your operating licence; even if that means driving the samples to the laboratory. Owners are encouraged to cooperate with neighbouring communities and coordinate sample submissions. If your sample dates do not coincide with your neighbour's, contact your regional Drinking Water Officer to discuss options.

B. Regulatory Responsibilities

Manitoba



Drinking Water

Laboratories

- Are laboratories going to remain open?

You are encouraged to contact ALS or your preferred laboratory if you have questions or concerns regarding sample submissions

- Can I safely drop off water samples at the lab?

Yes. If you call ahead, the laboratory will give you instructions on how to protect you and others while dropping off water samples. For most labs, payment by cash or cheque is discouraged. Tap, electronic transfer or bill on account are the preferred way to pay for analysis.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities Wastewater and Solid Waste

Access to Environment Officers and Certification Coordinator

- Regional Environment Officers and the Operators' Certification Coordinator remain available to owners and operators via phone and emails.
- We are not anticipating any interruptions to our services and it is business as usual for permits, licences, etc.
- For the next few weeks, routine inspections have been postponed in keeping with social distancing requirements. Meetings with stakeholders have been or will be rescheduled to teleconference or virtual conference calls during this time.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Wastewater and Solid Waste

Expectations for monitoring and reporting

- Routine monitoring and reporting requirements remain the same and should be in accordance with your Environment Act Licence.
- During any equipment breakdown or process upset at your wastewater treatment facility, the owner or operator of the facility shall immediately report the event by calling the 24-hour environmental accident reporting line at 204-944-4888 (toll-free 1-855-944-4888).
- The report shall indicate the nature of the event, the time and estimated duration of the event and the reason for the event.
- During any operating depth and freeboard non-compliance events for your wastewater treatment lagoon, please contact your local Environment Officer.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities Wastewater and Solid Waste

Disinfection

- If chlorine is used as disinfecting agent,
 - a) notify the Director;
 - b) dechlorinate effluent prior to discharge;
 - c) obtain grab samples prior to and daily during the discharge period; and
 - d) not discharge effluent where the concentration of the total residual chlorine is in excess of 0.02 milligrams per litre.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Wastewater and Solid Waste

Non-Critical and Non-Essential Maintenance

- The owner or the operator of a wastewater treatment facility is encouraged not to carry out any non-critical and non-essential maintenance to the facility during this COVID-19 pandemic time.
- Please contact your local Environment Officer if you have any question concerning your facility.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Wastewater and Solid Waste

Updating Emergency Management Plan

- The owner or operator of a wastewater treatment facility shall review and update the emergency response plan in accordance with the Manitoba Accidents Council Industrial Emergency Response Planning Guide.
- The plan must identify back up operators. Please note that all operators at water and wastewater facilities must be certified.
- The plan must consider making reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring facilities to share operators if needed and provide training before it is needed.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be used to share operators between jurisdictions during emergency. A draft MOU can be obtained from the department website.

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Manitoba



Wastewater and Solid Waste

Waste management and landfills

- A Certified Operator (LOB) is required to be on site when the public has access to the Active Area (i.e., disposal cell).
 - Practices in place in the event an operator is unavailable; use of another staff member to monitor site but with use of:
 - waste transfer bins
 - drop off locations

C. Regulatory Responsibilities Wastewater and Solid Waste

Operational Considerations:

- Identify back up operator
- Review & update Emergency Response Plan
- Review & update Operations Manual
- Make arrangements with neighboring facility for Operators to collaborate

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Wastewater and Solid Waste

Health & Safety Considerations:

- Restrict cash payments/transactions with contact
- No public entering employee offices or buildings
- Increased cleaning and sanitation of staff offices, lounges, facilities, vehicle interiors
- Reduce hours open for business

C. Regulatory Responsibilities

Wastewater and Solid Waste

Health & Safety Considerations:

- Reduce employee handling of waste – machine only
- Reduce or restrict certain recycling or collection activities that involve close contact (material sorting lines, some HHW collection depots,...)

C. Regulatory Responsibilities Wastewater and Solid Waste

Health & Safety Considerations:

- Reduce public access to tipping face
- Restrict `ReUse` type activities at this time (i.e., material dropped off away from the active area for others to pick up for reuse)

Seasonal Systems

- How does the Public Health Order affect Seasonal Systems?

<http://engageMB.ca/covid19-csp>

- Campgrounds, RV parks etc., can operate if they provide accommodation to recreational vehicles that act as a primary residence
- Owners may enter the business to do maintenance, repairs etc., so that means you can get your sites ready to open as long as social distancing takes place
- New process for Seasonal Water System Start-up:

[new web form](#)

<https://forms.gov.mb.ca/seasonal-water-system/>

Department Contacts

- The Department is available to support you during this difficult time.
- If you have any questions regarding your Licence, team of operators, please contact the certification program, your local Environment Officer or Drinking Water Officer.
- As the situation evolves, the Department may roll out other changes to assist operators and/or facility owners.
- For Latest announcements, please follow:

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/index.html>