



COVID 19 – Septage Management Memo from NHDES – March 31, 2020

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Residuals Management Section (NHDES RMS) would like to reach out to the septage haulers of New Hampshire who offer an essential service to New Hampshire communities as deemed by Governor Sununu. Your service is not only critical in protecting human health, but also in protecting the environment and water quality. NHDES RMS is using the Water Environment Federation (WEF) document, [The Water Professional's Guide to COVID-19](https://www.wef.org/news-hub/wef-news/the-water-professionals-guide-to-the-2019-novel-coronavirus/) (link: <https://www.wef.org/news-hub/wef-news/the-water-professionals-guide-to-the-2019-novel-coronavirus/>), recommendations as safety guidelines for septic tank service professionals during the current outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that "there is no evidence to date that COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewer systems, with or without wastewater treatment." COVID-19 concentrations and survival in feces, sewage or water are currently unknown.

There is no evidence to suggest that additional, COVID-19-specific protections are needed for employees involved in wastewater management operations, including those at wastewater treatment facilities. Wastewater treatment plant operations should ensure workers follow routine practices to prevent exposure to wastewater, including using the engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater¹. - OSHA

- **Protective face mask or splash-proof face shield** to protect nose and mouth from splashes/aerosols of human waste or sewage. Depending on the type of work this could include N95 masks with a verification of "face fit" testing for the employee including the limitation of facial hair.
- **Liquid-repellent coveralls** to keep human waste or sewage off clothing.
- **Waterproof gloves** to prevent exposure to human waste or sewage.
- **Rubber boots:** to prevent exposure to human waste or sewage.

NHDES recommends disinfecting wand and hoses that have come into contact with the septage. Chlorine is extensively used for wastewater disinfection due to its effectiveness, low cost, and ease of application. Please refer to Env-Wq 1605.09 on proper transportation of septage and spill control disinfection measures using household bleach. Refer to [EPA guidance on disinfectants for COVID-19](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2) (link: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>).

Please contact the wastewater treatment plant(s) your hauling company disposes at for changed hours of operations/septage receiving due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

- https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/sanitation/workers_handlingwaste.html
- <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>

For more information

If you have questions, comments or an updated **WWTF' septage disposal pricing/hours worksheet**, please contact the NHDES Residuals Management Section at (603) 271-2492 or email SludgeandSeptage@des.nh.gov.

¹ <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/index.html>