



The State of New Hampshire  
**Department of Environmental Services**



Robert R. Scott, Commissioner

**NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau (DWGB)  
COVID-19 Answers to FAQs & Information for Public Water Systems**  
*July 21, 2020*

The NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau (DWGB) understands that water suppliers may continue to face challenges in the months ahead related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is as important as ever that we assure that the water people are consuming is safe to drink. Public water systems have a heightened responsibility to protect public health, and access to clean water for drinking, cleaning and handwashing is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. You may have questions or concerns regarding how to handle various situations. The DWGB will try to address as many as possible in this document. As you are aware, the situation continues to change rapidly, so the DWGB will do its best to adjust and keep you informed. As information changes this document will be updated and reissued. NHDES has a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 updates which can be found at <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>.

The DWGB is committed to regular communication with water suppliers to help address these challenges. Among other steps, the DWGB is working with our technical assistance and training partners including New Hampshire Water Works Association (NHWWA), Granite State Rural Water Association (GSRWA), RCAP Solutions and New England Water Works Association (NEWWA) to get important information out to drinking water systems. The DWGB has held regular conference calls, most recently including drinking water and wastewater operators, where issues can be raised, discussed and solutions can be developed. These calls will continue as necessary. The DWGB is also committed to using whatever discretion and flexibility we have to appropriately deal with situations as they arise.

THANK YOU for your service and your dedication to ensuring the people of NH have safe drinking water during this unprecedented event!

[www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

29 Hazen Drive • PO Box 95 • Concord, NH 03302-0095  
(603) 271-3503 • Fax: 271-5171 • TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

Table of Contents

New Information..... 4

Operator Conference Calls..... 4

NHDES Situation and Contacts..... 4

Safety ..... 4

    Operator Safety ..... 4

    CDC COVID-19 Guidance on Critical Infrastructure Workers ..... 5

    Continuing Operation in the Workplace..... 5

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) ..... 6

    Cloth Masks Available..... 6

COVID-19’s Survivability in Water..... 7

Sampling..... 7

    Accessing Sample Site Locations ..... 7

    Frost-Proof Spigots for Bacteria, Disinfection Byproducts and Chlorine Sampling..... 7

    Bacteria..... 8

    Boil Water Advisories ..... 8

    Chemical Monitoring ..... 8

    Lead & Copper Schedules ..... 8

    Disinfection By-Products (DBP)..... 9

Laboratory Services..... 9

    Sample Drop Off at NH DHHS Public Health Lab ..... 9

Remote Sanitary Surveys Began May 22, 2020 ..... 9

DWSRF Construction Project Meetings ..... 10

Backflow Prevention ..... 10

Operators & Operator Certification..... 11

    Modified Staff Schedules to Reduce Exposure..... 11

    Backup Operators ..... 11

    Operator Training ..... 12

    Drinking Water Exam Notice ..... 12

Chemicals ..... 12

Essential/Critical Personnel ..... 13

Credentials/Documentation of Essential Workers ..... 14

Documenting & Tracking Expenses..... 14

COVID-19 Federal Disaster Declaration-Public Assistance Program .....	15
EPA Water Utility COVID-19 Financial Impact Tool .....	16
Funding .....	16
Grants and Loans .....	16
DWSRF Loan Disbursements.....	16
Public Meetings .....	16
Seasonal Systems .....	17
Seasonal Water Systems.....	17
Turning on Seasonal Water Services During COVID-19 .....	17
Emergency Plans & Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) .....	17
EPA Pandemic Incident Action Checklist .....	17
COOP Templates .....	18
Return to Normal .....	18
Startup and Flushing Procedures for Municipal and Large Water Systems .....	18
Startup and Flushing Procedures for Non-seasonal, Stand-alone Water Systems.....	19
Additional Guidance.....	19
Reopening Resources.....	19
System Operations.....	20
Routine System Flushing.....	20
Reductions in Revenues.....	20
Consumer Confidence Reports .....	21
Customer Outreach.....	21
DWGB Events .....	21
Links to More Information .....	21
Partners.....	24
Granite State Rural Water Association .....	24
NH Water Works Association .....	24
RCAP Solutions, Inc. ....	24
New England Water Works Association .....	24

## New Information

Any new information since the previous FAQ document was released is indicated with a NEW icon.



## Operator Conference Calls

The DWGB has hosted a number of conference calls to update drinking water and, more recently, wastewater operators on activities at the state level. The purpose of these calls was to answer any questions and hear concerns or issues. If a call is needed, a notice will be sent out prior to the call.

## NHDES Situation and Contacts

Most NHDES staff members continue to work remotely. As always, you can reach us via email or by calling. In general, the quickest way to reach us currently is through email. If you do call you will need to leave a message and someone will get back to you. We are doing our best to conduct business as usual. Since DWGB staff is not in the office often to collect mail please submit any necessary paperwork via email as much as possible.

**If you experience any issues that may impact your ability to maintain operations and provide safe drinking water, please contact us immediately at 603-271-2513 or 603-271-3503 (Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:00pm). For after hours, contact us via the NH State Police at 603-223-4381 and ask for the on-call person at NHDES. You will be directed to the NHDES Spill Response On-Call staff who will contact us.**

DWGB General Program Contacts		
Main Line	DWGBinfo@des.nh.gov	603-271-2513
Monitoring Program	DWmonitoring@des.nh.gov	603-271-2513
Operator Certification/Backflow	Wade.Pelham@des.nh.gov	603-271-2410
Emergency Plans	Stephanie.Nistico@des.nh.gov	603-271-0867
Small Systems	Cynthia.Klevens@des.nh.gov	603-271-3108
Large Systems	Richard.Skarinka@des.nh.gov	603-271-2948
Private Wells	Abigail.Fopiano@des.nh.gov	603-271-1974
Additional DWGB Contacts	<a href="https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/categories/contactus.htm">https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/categories/contactus.htm</a>	

## Safety

### Operator Safety

First and foremost, is the safety of water system staff. Personnel should follow the latest CDC guidelines for [social distancing and proper hygiene](#) and use [best practices](#) for worker safety.

Sample procedures for customer home visits from a community water system in another state has been shared. This example is posted on the NHDES COVID-19 website at

<https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/documents/sample-interim-guidance-for-home-visits.pdf>.

Please note, this is just an example and is not a required protocol or official guidance from NHDES.

Sample containers handled by customers, writing utensils, and paper may be a source of contamination.

More information is available at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3989.pdf>.

- Stay in contact with your local emergency management organization and local health district.
- Postpone any non-time-sensitive sampling and conduct no-contact sampling when possible.
- Wash hands frequently and avoid touching your face.
- Maintain recommended distances of six feet from all people and avoid contact with symptomatic or infected individuals.
- Avoid entry into hospitals and senior/long-term care facilities when possible.

#### CDC COVID-19 Guidance on Critical Infrastructure Workers

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published [interim guidance for COVID-19 safety practices for critical infrastructure workers](#).

#### Continuing Operation in the Workplace

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community. According to the CDC, in cases where workers have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic, they and their employers should engage in pre-screening, regular monitoring, wearing a face mask, social distancing, and workplace disinfecting and cleaning. As noted in its discussion of face masks, the CDC says employers can approve employees' supplied face coverings in the event of shortages of normal PPE (its ["Cloth Face Covers" webpage](#) provides recommendations on how to make your own). The CDC states that an employee who becomes sick during their work shift should be sent home immediately and that the surfaces in their workplaces be cleaned and disinfected and a list of persons who had contact with the ill employee compiled. The CDC advises that this guidance should be implemented in conjunction with its previously published [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).

While NHDES is not in a position to endorse or recommend any specific guidance on worksite health and safety measures relative to COVID-19, we are providing this [guidance regarding safety at construction sites from NHDOT](#) for reference purposes.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE," is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Personal protective equipment may include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests and full body suits.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Healthcare Setting: This FEMA guidance summarizes how organizations should consider and manage their personal protective equipment (PPE) needs while ensuring the protection of workers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response.

<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/04/22/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-addressing-ppe-needs-non-healthcare-setting>

If you are in need of PPE and are not able to obtain it through normal procurement processes, you should contact your local emergency management director (EMD). This process is dependent on your local situation. If you do not have a relationship with your local EMD you can go directly to the State Field Services' Local Liaison by calling 603-223-3663.

Granite State Rural Water Association (GSRWA)'s Webinar Recording of "COVID Tools & Best Practices" from April 28<sup>th</sup>

- To view a recording of the webinar [click here](#). To view the handouts [click here](#).
- COVID-19: Safety & Health Practices with Enhanced PPE – [Click here to view the EFI Global slides](#).
- COVID Disinfection and Cleaning Best Practices – [Click here to view the ServiceMaster Elite slides](#).

NHDES is aware that Granite State Rural Water Association has procured some masks for their members to purchase. They can be contacted at [www.granitestatewater.org](http://www.granitestatewater.org).

### Cloth Masks Available

EPA and FEMA were able to secure cloth masks for drinking water and wastewater workers that need them. NH received 60,000 of these cloth masks to be distributed directly to water and wastewater utilities throughout the state. Water and wastewater staff that are interested in requesting free cloth masks through this program can contact Stephanie Nistico at [stephanie.nistico@des.nh.gov](mailto:stephanie.nistico@des.nh.gov).

Be aware of fraudulent masks

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/usernotices/counterfeitResp.html>

- Make sure to order from trusted sources
- The FBI Washington Field Office and FBI HQ have each established COVID-19 fraud task forces due to the prevalence of procurement fraud and other schemes. If you think you

have information about suspicious activity by a vendor, or believe your organization was a victim of a scam or attempted fraud involving PPE, please report it to your local FBI field office or contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via email at [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov).

## COVID-19's Survivability in Water

EPA recommends that Americans continue to use and drink tap water as usual. The presence of COVID-19 has not been detected in drinking water supplies and based on current evidence the risk to water suppliers is low. 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. At this time, there are no indications that COVID-19 is in the drinking water supply or will affect the reliable supply of water. Refer to EPA and CDC's messaging about safety of drinking water:

- EPA Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater  
<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>
- CDC Water Transmission and COVID-19  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

## Sampling

Samples must be taken and results submitted to NHDES as scheduled. If you have questions about monitoring schedules and requirements, please email [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov).

### Accessing Sample Site Locations

If a sample site location is unavailable due to social distancing concerns or a building being closed, you may be able to add or change sample sites for samples taken in the distribution system; bacteria, disinfection by-products, and lead & copper. To request a sample site location change, send your request to [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov). You will be notified as soon as possible if the change has been approved.

### Frost-Proof Spigots for Bacteria, Disinfection Byproducts and Chlorine Sampling

Outdoor sample spigots or dedicated water quality "sampling stations" are acceptable locations to collect bacteria, DBPs, and chlorine residuals to minimize in-person contact or simply for convenience for site access, **as long as they are located in the middle of the distribution system and are representative of the sampling site they are replacing.** Please plan ahead to ensure continued sampling will be possible through the winter months by installing or verifying that sample spigots are frost-proof. An example frost-proof spigot installation may be viewed [HERE](#). Frost-proof sampling stations may be found through a web search for "Water Quality Sampling Stations" for a variety of manufacturers and either blow-off or self-draining options. As always, all new fixtures must be certified for drinking water use under NSF / ANSI 61, and please submit any site changes to [DWMonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:DWMonitoring@des.nh.gov) using the [Compliance Site Change Form](#).

## Bacteria

In lieu of permanently changing bacteria sample sites, DWGB is allowing water systems to collect bacteria samples in the distribution system at an alternative location in the distribution system, if necessary to avoid going into people's homes or other facilities that are high-risk or unavailable due to the facility being closed. The selected alternative location must be a location that is representative of the water in the distribution system. An alternative location may include an outside tap or other location that is lower risk for the sampler. Extra care and caution for tap cleaning and flushing prior to sampling should be used for any alternative locations. As always, follow-up sampling will be required for all positive bacteria results. At this time, using an alternate bacteria site location does not need pre-approval from NHDES. However, the public water system must provide a clear and concise description of the location where the sample was taken on the sampling analysis request form so that the lab can accurately submit that information to us.

For water systems not serving the public at all during a scheduled sampling month, NHDES recommends that you continue to monitor the water system as scheduled, so that your system will be ready to go when the time comes to open. However, if you are unable to take your scheduled bacteria sample in a scheduled month, please email DWGB at [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov) *no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of that month* with your PWSID, water system name, your name and contact information and when you expect to be operational again. If you do not inform us the system is not serving water and do not sample, DES will issue a monitoring violation requiring a public notice. **Please check your schedule.**

## Boil Water Advisories

E. coli detections will, as always, necessitate issuing a boil water order with acute public notice, ASAP. You will need to consult with NHDES throughout the incident. During this time, because DWGB staff are working remotely, you must treat it as you would any after-hours or weekend emergency by contacting the NH State Police at 603-223-4381 and asking for the on-call person at NHDES.

In order to avoid any potential confusion during a boil water order advisory, NHDES has changed the [boil order public notice template](#) to make it clear that boil orders have nothing to do with COVID-19.

## Chemical Monitoring

Chemical samples sites do not have the same overall flexibility as the other monitoring programs. The other programs (bacteria and DBP) sample in the distribution system so moving a site a little really doesn't affect the results (Lead & Copper does need to meet specific site requirements in the distribution system). Thus all Chemical samples should be taken at the site and monitoring period noted on your Master Sampling Schedule.

## Lead & Copper Schedules

The DWGB has adjusted some lead and copper sampling schedules. Water systems monitoring lead & copper annually or triennially that were scheduled to sample in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020

have been rescheduled to the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020, meaning that you have to sample sometime in July, August, or September. If a specific sampling site is unavailable, please contact [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov) to request approval of an alternate site. **Please check your schedule.**

#### Disinfection By-Products (DBP)

The DWGB will make adjustments to DBP sampling schedules that are allowed within the rules. Please contact [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov) if you are unable to collect your scheduled DBP sample to request an alternate site or possible rescheduling. **Please check your schedule.**

### Laboratory Services

The State lab is operating under normal business hours to support drinking water compliance sampling. Please note that you may mail in your water sample to the DHHS Public Health Lab as long as you continue to follow any temperature preservation requirements. Typically, samples need to be transported to the lab at temperatures less than 6 degrees Celsius for most organics and less than 10 degrees Celsius for bacteria. As far as the DWGB knows, all of the private labs are also operating. If you have any questions about lab hours or sample drop off procedures, please contact your laboratory directly.

#### Sample Drop Off at NH DHHS Public Health Lab

Go to the main entrance door at NHDES on 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH. Under the portico there is a table and instructions to call lab staff who will come collect the sample while maintaining social distancing. Please remain at the entrance until your sample is collected.

### Remote Sanitary Surveys Began May 22, 2020

Approximately 700 public water systems are inspected each year by DWGB Surveyors for the main elements of a Sanitary Survey per [Env-Dw 720 Inspections](#). Participation by the system Owner and Operator in these inspections is required per [Env-Dw 502.24 / 25 Owner and Operator Responsibilities](#). In accordance with current social distancing requirements, we are conducting these surveys remotely, via telephone and/or videoconferencing. The overall process consists of the following steps:

- 1) Schedule Remote Sanitary Survey Phone Interview with NHDES Surveyor.
- 2) Answer Survey Questionnaire **and send photographs** in advance or via live video-conference or phone.
- 3) Receive Site Inspection Report with any deficiencies or follow up actions required. This report starts the 30-day clock for response to any required actions; **if an extended deadline is needed, email a written request.**
- 4) Complete required follow up actions, if any, and notify DWGB via reply email or mail to close the cited deficiencies. Note that a violation may be issued if a response is not received by 30 days.
- 5) Receive DWGB Sanitary Survey Letter summarizing the interview, any follow up actions, and recommendations.

**Please note that if DWGB staff are unable to complete the remote sanitary survey, an onsite inspection may be necessary at a time and date to be determined later this calendar year.**

## **DWSRF Construction Project Meetings**

NHDES is discouraging IN-PERSON project meetings for DWSRF construction projects including pre-bid, bid opening, pre-construction, and other construction meetings. Water systems and engineering consultants are using alternative approaches to conventional meeting formats to minimize personal contact, as described below. DES recommends use of these alternative formats to the extent possible:

### **Pre- Bid Meetings**

- Conduct teleconference pre-bid meeting announced in the Advertisement for Bids in the contract documents, or with an invitation by addendum
- Distribute teleconference pre-bid meeting agenda at least one-day prior to meeting date
- Provide a walk-through video of the project areas as part of an addendum or issued with the meeting minutes
- If necessary, offer a one-time, in person walk-through of the project area(s) at a later prearranged date and time, with only general contractors. The walk-through should implement social distancing protocols

### **Bid Openings**

- Conduct prearranged teleconference bid opening or videotaped bid opening, with methodology announced in the Information to Bidders section of the contract documents, or provided as an invitation to all plan holders as part of the addendum process
- Have two people witness the bid opening, with proper social distancing protocols
- Post all bid results on the water system website
- Post videotaped bid opening to water system website, if applicable

## **Backflow Prevention**

Per NH Department of Environmental Services' Administrative Rule Env-Dw 505, the deadline for submitting the annual backflow prevention device testing report is April 1 of the year following the testing. Typically, reports for calendar-year 2019 backflow testing would be due by April 1, 2020. Due to the impacts on public water system resources associated with the COVID situation NHDES extended the reporting deadline for 2019-year backflow reports from April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2020 to give PWSs additional flexibility. DWGB understands there may be instances where you are physically unable to get to some of the backflow locations or the sites may be inaccessible. DWGB understands this may happen and recommend keeping good records of your attempt to test, and the reason why the test was not conducted.

On April 10, 2020 Governor Chris Sununu issued [Emergency Order #29](#) establishing temporary modifications of certain Executive Branch deadlines and requirements. Due to the state of emergency, all large public water systems are only required to test back flow prevention devices annually for 2020. In accordance with the order, NHDES will only require backflow prevention devices which protect large public water systems to be tested once in 2020. This applies to devices on high-hazard connections and on low-hazard connections. If a public water system decides to test more frequently they may choose to do that, however for calendar year 2020 NHDES will only require one routine test for each device. If you have any questions please contact [wade.pelham@des.nh.gov](mailto:wade.pelham@des.nh.gov) or (603) 271-2410.

## Operators & Operator Certification

It is important at this time, as always, to have NH certified operators responsible for the safety and operation of public water systems in NH. If a certified primary operator becomes no longer able to serve a NH PWS, it is important for the certified individual to notify the PWS ownership/management and NHDES as soon as possible (refer to [contact chart](#) above). This communicates the status of operations at the individual PWS and also allows the DWGB to better track impacts to operator availability on a statewide level.

### Modified Staff Schedules to Reduce Exposure

Many utilities are modifying schedules to reduce exposure while still maintaining operational coverage. Water utilities are intentionally reducing staffing levels to a minimum in a proactive effort to reduce the potential for COVID-19 related impacts. SCADA and remote monitoring, where available, are proving valuable in supporting operations while helping to allow PWS staff to observe public health related distancing guidance. As noted in the [Sampling section](#) above, the DWGB has updated guidance for some sampling procedures to account for social distancing and property access restriction considerations.

### Backup Operators

If a PWS needs additional operational support, NHDES maintains a list of contract water works operators (<https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/documents/dwgb-7-2.pdf>) which may be able to provide services. In addition, GSRWA is maintaining a [list of backup operators](#) available on their website.

If additional hands are needed, other individuals can perform basic work at NH PWSs provided it is under the direction of a NH certified primary operator, however only certified operators can make water quality or quantity decisions.

NH regulations do provide for reciprocity for water operators from other states. Operators from other states may apply for NH reciprocity provided they meet the NH education and experience requirements (detailed in Env-Dw 502) for the certification grade level sought. Please contact Wade Pelham at [wade.pelham@des.nh.gov](mailto:wade.pelham@des.nh.gov) for more information.

NH regulations allow for temporary modified certification procedures during extenuating circumstances. NHDES will continue to monitor the situation, its impact on public water systems and its workforce and will be prepared to authorize modified procedures as events require.

### Operator Training

As an interim measure, NHDES is allowing GSRWA, RCAP, NEWWA and NHWWA to provide remote learning opportunities until in-person training can resume, provided a platform is used that can validate attendance. Visit partner websites for available training (contact information is available at the end of the document under [Partners Section](#)).

### Drinking Water Exam Notice

Due to the continued health risk potential associated with large classroom-type gatherings, NHDES will not be holding a drinking water operator exam session this July. Thankfully, for individuals who have a need or desire to take a certification exam in the near future, grade 1-4 exams can be accessed through a different process, one which provides for increased examinee safety.

NH uses the same drinking water exams as many states nationally, including Maine and Massachusetts. ME and MA administer their exams via branch locations (often H&R Block branches) throughout the northeast, including sites in Portsmouth, Concord and Manchester, NH. An applicant can register online for these exam sessions:

<http://online.goamp.com/CandidateHome/CandidateInformation.aspx>

These sessions allow for an examinee to take an exam individually on a computer terminal with far less exposure potential, and with the ability for site cleaning steps between exams. Since the MA and ME exams are the same ones NH uses, they are fully recognized by NHDES. At the end of an exam session the scoring results are available immediately, and a copy of the confirmation sheet can be submitted along with a completed NH application for NH drinking water certification. There are currently NH state-specific reasons that the NH exam can't be included as a selection along with the MA and ME exam options in this process. The convenience and, more importantly, health safety considerations with this method however have NHDES evaluating this possibility for the future. If you and/or your utility would support NHDES being able to offer this NH exam option in the future, please contact Wade Pelham at [wade.pelham@des.nh.gov](mailto:wade.pelham@des.nh.gov) or 603-271-2410.

### Chemicals

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

Notify the [appropriate DWGB engineer contact](#) (see chart above) if you need to suspend any treatment processes due to shortages of chemical feed supplies. At this time, disinfection is the

highest treatment priority for those systems that are required to disinfect such as surface water systems.

## Essential/Critical Personnel

Pursuant to Emergency Order #17, the State of New Hampshire has compiled a list of industry sectors that provide essential services and support to COVID-19 and the core missions of the State. Entities that fall under this guidance shall continue to operate with necessary staff to complete critical and essential functions. A list of designated “Essential Services” can be found at [https://www.nheconomy.com/NHEconomy/media/NH-Economy/Exhibit-A-to-Emergency-Order-17-List-of-Essential-Businesses\\_1.pdf](https://www.nheconomy.com/NHEconomy/media/NH-Economy/Exhibit-A-to-Emergency-Order-17-List-of-Essential-Businesses_1.pdf).

Below is the list of essential services specific to Water, Wastewater and Public Works.

### Waste and Wastewater

Employees needed to operate and maintain public and private drinking water and wastewater/drainage infrastructure, including:

- Operational staff at water authorities
- Operational staff at community water systems
- Operational staff at wastewater treatment facilities
- Workers repairing water and wastewater conveyances or construction necessary to maintain critical operations at water and wastewater facilities, and workers performing required sampling or monitoring
- Operational staff for water distribution and testing
- Operational staff at wastewater collection facilities
- Operational staff and technical support for SCADA Control systems
- Chemical disinfectant suppliers for wastewater and personnel protection
- Workers that maintain digital systems infrastructure supporting water and wastewater operations
- Labs that provide analytical services to ensure public water systems are providing safe drinking water
- Drinking water well drillers and pump installers

### Public Works

- Workers who support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential dams, locks and levees
- Workers who support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities and operations, including roads and bridges, water and sewer main breaks, fleet maintenance personnel, construction of critical or strategic infrastructure, traffic signal maintenance, emergency location services for buried utilities, maintenance of digital systems infrastructure supporting public works operations, and other emergent issues
- Workers – including contracted vendors – involved in the construction of critical or strategic infrastructure including public works construction, airport operations, water,

sewer, gas, electrical, nuclear, oil refining and other critical energy services, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, municipal transfer stations, and internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services)

- Workers such as plumbers, electricians, exterminators, inspectors and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, construction sites and projects, and needed facilities
- Support, such as road and line clearing and utility relocation, to ensure the availability of needed facilities, transportation, energy and communications
- Support to ensure the effective removal, storage, and disposal of residential and commercial solid waste and hazardous waste
- Licensed site clean-up professionals and other workers addressing hazardous spills, waste sites, and remediation
- Workers who support the operation, maintenance and public safety of state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, water supply protection lands, and other critical natural resources
- Workers who support storm clean-up operations (e.g., foresters)

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has released [Version 3.1 of the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers list](#). Version 3.1 provides clarity around a range of positions needed to support the critical infrastructure functions laid out in the original guidance published on March 19 and Versions 2.0 and 3.0.

The Guide continues to be a resource for state and local decision makers and is in no way a binding document. Ultimately, all final decisions rest with state and local authorities, who must use their own judgment to balance public health and safety with the need to maintain critical infrastructure.

## Credentials/Documentation of Essential Workers

There is no specific document needed to prove you are essential. However, DWGB does suggest making sure you have your ID and a company ID or business card.

EPA has provided a water utility template that state, localities and water utilities can use to provide documentation to workers that are considered essential:

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/water\\_utility\\_template\\_covid19.docx](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/water_utility_template_covid19.docx)

## Documenting & Tracking Expenses

Have discussions regarding finances associated with the response and sustaining operations. Are appropriate staff able to make emergency purchases if needed? It is critical that this is established ahead of time. **Documentation is important.** Remember to track ALL time and expenses related to your response to COVID-19. This information can be used as part of a post-incident investigation or if federal funds become available for assistance.

On Thursday, April 16, FEMA released the “[Disaster Financial Management Guide](#)” to support jurisdictions in establishing and implementing sound disaster financial management practices, which are critical for successful response and recovery. The guide takes an all-hazards approach and addresses a broad range of issues and contains concepts, principles and resources applicable to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response environment. The guide identifies the capabilities and activities necessary to prepare and successfully implement disaster financial management while maintaining fiscal responsibility throughout response and recovery operations. This includes considerations and practices necessary to track, calculate and justify the costs of an emergency; support local reimbursement reconciliation; avoid de-obligation of grant funding; and effectively fund and implement recovery projects and priorities. The Guide and Fact Sheet are available at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/187126>.

#### [COVID-19 Federal Disaster Declaration-Public Assistance Program](#)

On April 3, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a statewide Major Disaster for the State of New Hampshire (DR 4516) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (incident period from January 20, 2020 and ongoing). Federal funding is available to eligible government entities and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures implemented in direct response to COVID-19. If your community/organization has incurred costs due to emergency protective measures taken in response to COVID-19, they may be eligible for cost reimbursement under the Public Assistance Program. If your community/organization is interested in applying for disaster assistance you should contact your local Emergency Management Director.

The [HSEM Resource Center COVID-19 Disaster Webpage](#) provides information related the COVID-19 Major Disaster Declaration (DR 4516) including presentations and recordings of Applicant Briefings. The webpage is updated regularly as information is released from FEMA.

Please contact your HSEM Field Representative (local governments) via their email address or the HSEM Public Assistance Staff (State agencies and Private Non-Profits) at [NHPA@dos.nh.gov](mailto:NHPA@dos.nh.gov) with questions that you may have about the Grants Portal or RPA submission process. If you are unsure who your HSEM Field Representative is (local governments), you may call 603-223-3663 for assistance.

An FAQ on the Public Assistance Program and a guidance document on eligible applicants under the Public Assistance Program at the links below.

- HSEM Public Assistance FAQs  
<https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Assistance-FAQ-COVID19.pdf>
- HSEM Eligible Applicants under Public Assistance Program

<https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Assistance-Eligible-Applicants.pdf>

### **EPA Water Utility COVID-19 Financial Impact Tool**

EPA released a new tool to help water utilities assess the financial impact of COVID-19 on operations. Throughout the COVID-19 national health emergency—and as communities across the country reopen—water utilities have reliably provided safe drinking water and critical wastewater services. This new tool will help provide important information about the financial and operational health of water utilities, which play an integral role in protecting human health and the environment for our nation.

Developed by EPA’s Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center, the Water Utility COVID-19 Financial Impact Tool leads water utilities through questions that can determine how their revenues, expenses and cash flow have been affected. This tool will help water utilities understand the financial health as they plan for ongoing operation and maintenance and capital infrastructure needs, including implementing plans to repair, replace and modernize aging infrastructure.

Visit the EPA website to access the [Water Utility COVID-19 Financial Impact Tool](#).

## **Funding**

### **Grants and Loans**

At this time DWGB plans to move forward with all of their regular grant programs (source water protection grants, asset management grants, etc.) and the 2020 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) annual round.

### **DWSRF Loan Disbursements**

Loan disbursements or requests for grant funds should be submitted electronically to the appropriate program contact. Please see the [PWS funding resources chart](#) for program contacts. DWGB staff will process your requests as quickly as possible however, we do ask for your patience as we work within this new environment.

### **Public Meetings**

Some municipalities, village districts and other water systems may not have been able to conduct their annual meetings. The Governor issued a memorandum on How to Conduct Emergency Meetings in Compliance with New Hampshire’s Right-to-Know Law (RSA Chapter 91-A) in light of COVID-19 Concerns and applicable Executive and Emergency Orders. This memorandum provides guidance on how to hold emergency meetings in light of Executive Order 2020-04 (declaring a State of Emergency) and Emergency Order #12 (temporarily modifying public access under RSA Chapter 91-A). It sets forth specific procedures that must be followed during the State of Emergency.

For more information, please see the [emergency meeting guidance checklist](#) and the right-to-know checklist at <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/documents/rtk-checklist.docx>.

## Seasonal Systems

### Seasonal Water Systems

If you own or operate a seasonal water system, NHDES strongly recommends that you perform all of your seasonal startup procedures and take the schedule samples so that you will be ready to open in a moment's notice when the time comes.

If you choose to wait and open the water system at a later date, please contact Jackie Howarth ([dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov)) on or before the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month that you were scheduled to open with your PWSID, water system name, your name and contact information, and state your new planned opening date. NHDES will adjust your sampling schedule. You now will have to take a routine bacteria sample in your new planned opening month and will need to perform your seasonal startup procedure at that time. Failure to do so will result in a violation requiring a public notice.

### Turning on Seasonal Water Services During COVID-19

Please notify the DWGB if you decide to delay startup of your seasonal water system, as these dates impact your sampling requirements. Other than schedule changes, seasonal system startups should follow the normal startup procedures including shock chlorination and flushing of the full system, and submittal of your startup certification and clean bacteria sample to the DWGB. Changes in your system opening date should be reported to [DWMonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:DWMonitoring@des.nh.gov).

## Emergency Plans & Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP)

If you haven't already, it is very important to take the time to review your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) with staff. Make sure your plan is updated to ensure continuity of operations in the event your utility is impacted.

Make contact with your local Emergency Management Director (EMD). Requests for assistance should be funneled through your local EMD.

A continuity of operation plan (COOP) is a document that ensures essential operations can be performed during manmade or natural disasters to provide essential services. Utilities can develop a COOP to be all-encompassing (i.e., all-hazards approach), or it can be specific to situations like a pandemic. Please see the documents below for COOP templates.

EPA Pandemic Incident Action Checklist

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/pandemic\\_iac\\_final\\_032620\\_508\\_fillable.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/pandemic_iac_final_032620_508_fillable.pdf)

## COOP Templates

- NH Continuity of Operations Plan Template  
[https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/?page\\_id=2783](https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/?page_id=2783)
- National Rural Water Association Water System [Pandemic Template](#)
- Business Pandemic Influenza Planning [Checklist](#)
- The **Knowledge Retention Tool** Spreadsheet for Small Water Systems is an Excel spreadsheet that helps operators consolidate system information into one location, enabling increased organization and coordination among operators. Originally designed to assist in personnel transition, the tool encompasses a wide variety of information that a new or contract operator would need to effectively manage and operate a small water system. However, this tool could be helpful during a pandemic to list important processes. In the case of staff reduction due to illness others stepping in will have access to important procedures in addition to any Standard Operating Procedures.  
[Knowledge Retention Tool Spreadsheet for Small Water Systems.xlsx](#)
- **Updated Pandemic Business Continuity Guide, and CDC Resources for Employees to Reduce their Risks When Out in Communities**  
WaterISAC and the Association of Metropolitan Water agencies have released a refreshed version of their pandemic guide, now titled Business Continuity Planning for a Pandemic: A Reference Guide. The guide is intended to help utilities prepare for, respond to, and recover from pandemics. While the previous version focused solely on pandemic influenza, the new version is written with a broader scope. It includes a revised checklist that places a greater emphasis on telework, addresses topics relevant to reopening facilities, and reflects other lessons from the current COVID-19 pandemic. [Access the guide at WaterISAC.](#)

## Return to Normal

When things begin to get back to normal, water systems should follow proper startup and flushing procedures at locations that have been closed temporarily, or have a significant reduction in water use due to COVID-19.

### Startup and Flushing Procedures for Municipal and Large Water Systems

Facilities such as restaurants, schools, and businesses served by a municipal/large water system may be temporarily closed or have substantially reduced their water consumption due to the social distancing requirements. All public water systems have continued to monitor water quality in accordance with their water sampling plans including bacteria and all regulated water parameters. However, water may remain stagnant in the piping of closed facilities which can cause conditions that can increase the risk for growth of bacteria including Legionella, and create unsafe levels of lead or copper. To ensure that water is safe to drink when the facility is returned to normal service, it is recommended that all hot and cold taps be flushed through all points (faucets, showers, ice-machines, dishwashers) to reintroduce fresh water throughout the

building. Hot water taps should be flushed until it reaches its maximum temperature, and cold water taps should be flushed until water runs cold, indicating fresh water from the main.

### **Startup and Flushing Procedures for Non-seasonal, Stand-alone Water Systems**

Small public water systems that have been temporarily closed such as schools, daycares, restaurants or small businesses should continue all scheduled water quality sampling as directed by DWGB, even if temporarily closed, to maintain your readiness to reopen when permitted to do so. Please see specific sampling guidance under other FAQs. This guidance applies to systems that have maintained water system pressure throughout the shutdown. Seasonal systems that depressurize their piping must follow the seasonal startup procedures and certification to the state.

To ensure that water is safe to drink following this temporary shut-down or reduction in water use, it is recommended that all hot and cold taps be flushed through all points (faucets, showers, ice-machines, dishwashers) to reintroduce fresh water throughout the building. Hot water taps should be flushed until it reaches its maximum temperature, and cold water taps should be flushed until water runs cold, indicating fresh water from the well source. Once thorough flushing is completed, please continue your scheduled water quality sampling.

### **Additional Guidance**

For additional guidance to ensure the safety of the buildings water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown please see the CDC's [Guidance for Building Water Systems](#) or EPA's [Information on Maintaining or Restoring Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use](#).

For more information on startup and flushing procedures, please see the [DWGB Guidelines for Startup and Flushing Procedures for Reopening Facilities](#) located on our website.

### **Reopening Resources**

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has made available a "[Reopening Business Digital Resources Center](#)," a site that presents the latest state guidelines, guidance and advice for businesses, and other tools and resources to help employers and employees return to work safely and successfully.

On June 15, 2020 Governor Chris Sununu issued the following Emergency Orders as part of the state's response to COVID-19:

[Emergency Order #52](#) - An order regarding public health guidance for business operations and advising Granite Staters that they are safer at home

[Exhibit A to Emergency Order #52](#) - Universal Guidelines for all New Hampshire Employers and Employees.

These guidelines apply to businesses and organizations that have been deemed essential and remained open during any order for Granite Staters to “Stay at Home” and those that are re-opening all or a portion of their operations. These guidelines are effective immediately.

[Exhibit B to Emergency Order #52](#) – Industry Specific Guidelines for Businesses, Organizations, and Sectors Operating Pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Emergency Order #52.

The Governor’s Economic Re-Opening Task Force recommends guidelines for safeguarding all New Hampshire businesses and individuals during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. These industry-specific guidelines are based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and is intended to protect the public’s health and allow New Hampshire to remain open for business.

The intent of these guidelines is to reduce transmission of COVID-19 among employees and customers; support healthy business operations; and maintain a healthy work environment.

## System Operations

### Routine System Flushing

Should you decide to alter your flushing schedule, NHDES recommends being aware of potential impacts including 1) limited staffing and resources to conduct flushing; 2) being able to maintain social distancing as you perform flushing; and 3) potentially disrupting water quality to your customers during the day. Some systems are planning to continue with flushing procedures as would be performed under normal circumstances but while maintaining social distancing. Other systems have expressed delaying their flushing schedule a few weeks out due to reduced staffing or concerns about potentially discolored water. NHDES is seeking information from other states to get a regional-wide standpoint on flushing and will provide updates as information becomes available.

### Reductions in Revenues

Loss of revenue may continue to impact water systems in the coming months. It’s likely that smaller systems are going to see more of the impacts of revenue loss than larger ones. Some systems have noticed a deficit in their first quarter from customers not being able to pay bills and it’s likely that this deficit will continue into the second quarter. Unfortunately, loss of revenue is not eligible for FEMA reimbursement at this time. NHDES will provide updates as more information becomes available. It is important to track this information throughout this event. NHDES has frequent discussions with partners (NHWWA, NEWWA, RCAP and GSRWA) regarding solutions to offset the reduction in revenue many systems are experiencing due to less water being used and customers not paying their water bills. If you need assistance or additional resources, the partners are available to assist with asset management, emergency planning, applications for any available funding, projecting cash flow and lack of revenue. For contact information, please visit the [Partner section](#) at the end of this document.

On June 30, 2020 Governor Sununu issued [Emergency Order #58](#): An order terminating Emergency Order #3 which prohibited all providers of electric, gas, water, telephone, cable, VOiP,

internet, and deliverable fuels service in the State of New Hampshire from disconnecting or discontinuing service for non-payment. This order terminated on July 15, 2020.

## Consumer Confidence Reports

**For community water systems, your Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) were due to be delivered to ALL customers (billing units and/or service connections) and to NHDES by July 1.** Please visit the [Consumer Confidence Webpage](#) for information on completing your CCR.

## Customer Outreach

Water systems should continue to keep your customers updated. Reassure them that the water is safe to drink and talk about what actions you have taken and changes to procedures. Provide updates on water system websites or social media.

GSRWA can provide technical assistance by helping operators communicate with their customers by assisting with establishing websites, email and text notification systems, and setting up virtual meetings. For more information please visit <http://www.granitestatewater.org/> or call (603) 756-3670.

The [Value of Water Campaign](#) helps address common themes that have arisen over the course of COVID-19. As you communicate with your water customers, be sure to emphasize the assurance that water is safe to drink and the importance of not flushing wipes. Click on the link to learn more about the Value of Water Campaign and improve communication to your water customers.

## DWGB Events

All in-person DWGB training events through July have either been cancelled or postponed.

## Links to More Information

There are many resources available. Below are just a few that can assist with your preparations and response.

### NH Department of Environmental Services COVID-19 website

- <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>

### NH Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 website

- <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

### American Water Works Association

- <https://www.awwa.org/AWWA-Articles/coronavirus-and-water>
- *Utility Actions to Sustain Operations During COVID-19* webinar. This webinar shared practices that utilities have implemented to prepare and respond to COVID-19
- <https://www.gotostage.com/channel/awwa-covid-19>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

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

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidance on Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater**

- [www.epa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.epa.gov/coronavirus)
- <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>
- [Frequent questions](#) about drinking water and wastewater and Coronavirus (COVID-19).

In the future webinar recordings will be available on the main EPA COVID webpage for DW/WW.

EPA Webinar | COVID-19 - Water System Re-entry and Returning to “Normal” Operations for water and wastewater systems on best practices for water utility workers as they return to offices and transition back to “normal” operations, including continuing safety precautions in the workplace: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/834642982638366472>

EPA’s Water Sector Best Practices During COVID-19 webinar recording is available at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/573690390482251531>

EPA Webinar | Federal Funding for Water and Wastewater Utilities Related to COVID-19. Water and wastewater utilities have been financially impacted by COVID-19. The webinar will outline the types of financial impacts to utilities; summarize the availability and flexibility of various federal funding programs related to COVID-19 from EPA, Treasury, FEMA, and USDA; and answer questions from participants. The webinar was recorded and will be available at a later date on the main EPA COVID webpage for DW/WW.

### **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>
- COVID-19 Updates as of May 21, 2021 including information on reopening America: <https://www.waterisac.org/portal/coronavirus-pandemic-updated-may-21-2020>

### **Public Works Net (PW.Net)**

An electronic mailing list for open discussion among people who are associated with Public Works. To register go to <https://t2.unh.edu/public-works-email-list>.

### **NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program (NHPWMA)**

NHPWMA has members from all over the state. Assistance could include such assistance as sharing of water treatment chemicals. The membership list and how to join is available at <https://t2.unh.edu/ma/>.

### **UNH Technology Transfer (T2) Center**

NH Departments of Public Work & COVID 19 - Special Resource Document from UNH T2

- <https://t2.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/nhdpw-covid19.pdf>
- The UNH T2 hosts several examples of Policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from local sources, as well as links to outside resources that may be of interest. The collection is organized by subject matter <https://t2.unh.edu/policies-standard-operating-procedures#collapse-1-3>.

Every other Thursday the UNH T2 hosts a *Chit, Chat and Chew with T2*, special e-series!

Join this conference call to hear about how public works is dealing with the new challenges and adjusting to a different work environment. Join by computer or phone! Zoom meeting details are on the [T2 Training Calendar](#).

### **WaterOperator.org**

This is a free service to support small local community water and wastewater operators with comprehensive resources and information in one easy-to-use place and serves the 800+ training, primacy, and technical service organizations, by helping operators get to their information. Sign up for the e-newsletter at [www.wateroperator.org](http://www.wateroperator.org).

### **Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)**

- <https://efcnetwork.org/>

Webinar | A Conversation Regarding Coronavirus and How it Might Affect Your Small Water System's Finances & Management under Workshops & Webinars - Past Events

Webinar | Ask the Expert: Protecting and Investing in the Water Workforce Through COVID-19 and Beyond – Past Events

Webinar | Keeping the Water on During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic – Past Events

### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

- <https://www.fema.gov/>

To expand awareness and understanding of its recently released [COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season guidance](#) (discussed in the May 21 Security and Resilience Update), FEMA's National Preparedness Directorate conducted webinars which

discussed how the guidance can assist jurisdictions review and modify their plans given the constraints and limitations of the ongoing pandemic.

## Partners

Our NH partners are a great resource for technical assistance, training and guidance. Each of these organizations has a specific COVID-19 resource page.

### **Granite State Rural Water Association**

Jennifer Palmiotto, Executive Director

603-756-3670

[www.granitestatewater.org](http://www.granitestatewater.org)

[jpalmiotto@granitestatewater.org](mailto:jpalmiotto@granitestatewater.org)

Online Training: <http://www.granitestatewater.org/Training.asp>

### **NH Water Works Association**

Boyd Smith, Executive Director

603-415-3959

[www.nhwwa.org](http://www.nhwwa.org)

[bsmith@nhwwa.org](mailto:bsmith@nhwwa.org)

Online Training: <https://www.nhwwa.org/events/registration/>

### **RCAP Solutions, Inc.**

Erick Toledo, NH State Lead

978-227-2277

[www.rcapsolutions.org](http://www.rcapsolutions.org)

[etoledo@rcapsolutions.org](mailto:etoledo@rcapsolutions.org)

Online Training: [https://www.rcap.org/training/action~agenda/request\\_format~html/#event-calendar](https://www.rcap.org/training/action~agenda/request_format~html/#event-calendar)

### **New England Water Works Association**

Don Bunker, Education Director

508-893-7979

[www.newwa.org](http://www.newwa.org)

[dbunker@newwa.org](mailto:dbunker@newwa.org)

On-line Training: <https://newwa.org/TrainingCertification/UpcomingCoursesEvents.aspx>