

## Information from NYS DEC:

### **COVID-19 - Information for WWTP Operators**

#### COVID-19: Wastewater Treatment Plant Compliance

DEC is receiving inquiries related to relief from SPDES permit and regulatory compliance. DEC is not authorizing any general waivers of compliance requirements, and will make best efforts to promptly respond to more specific inquiries and individual circumstances.

Permittees and wastewater facility operators need to continue to strive for permit and regulatory compliance.

When issues with compliance are identified, facilities should: (i) document problems, (ii) document efforts to address the problems and/or non-compliance, and (iii) document any additional actions undertaken to maintain facility treatment and achieve compliance. As required under standard protocols, operators should report non-compliance, the associated circumstances related to non-compliance, and actions to address non-compliance to DEC.

DEC will consider the overall circumstances and extent of non-compliance, and actions by the facility to resolve issues.

#### COVID-19: Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations and Staffing

Wastewater treatment is an essential public health function. COVID-19 may affect operator and worker availability at these facilities - which are critical utilities that are NOT subject to announced workforce reduction requirements.

The qualifications for wastewater treatment plant operators are presented in 6 NYCRR Part 650. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) guidance on wastewater plant staffing provides appropriate flexibility concerning the need for certified operators to be present in TOGS 1.5.4 "Guidelines for Staffing Wastewater Treatment Plants" and in TOGS 5.1.6 "Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification."

Treatment plant operators are considered essential staff to meet regulatory requirements, protect public health, and provide required monitoring for public transparency. Treatment plant operators should have staffing plans, emergency response plans, and operations and maintenance plans, to guide operation and response in stressed or emergency circumstances.

### COVID-19: Wastewater Treatment Links for Information on Precautions for Exposure

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has received inquiries regarding COVID-19 in wastewater and appropriate precautions for wastewater workers. In short, standard good operational and protective protocols normally employed are recommended to be continued by the leading scientific authorities. You may find useful information and guidance in the following links. Wastewater treatment is considered an essential public health responsibility. As such, workers in wastewater utilities are exempt from workforce reduction requirements. Please feel free to share this information with your municipal supervisors.

#### **CDC - Water Transmission and COVID-19**

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

#### **Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater**

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

#### **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/>

#### **WHO - Water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for COVID-19**

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>

#### **OSHA - Solid Waste and Wastewater Management Workers**

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

## **Guidance for Reducing Health Risks to Workers Handling Human Waste or Sewage**

[https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/sanitation/workers\\_handlingwaste.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/sanitation/workers_handlingwaste.html)

If you have questions related to the WWTP plant operations and staffing, information links, or compliance, you may email the Division of Water, Bureau of Water Compliance at [edward.hampston@dec.ny.gov](mailto:edward.hampston@dec.ny.gov)

If you have specific facility information and questions on compliance for your facility, please contact the Regional Water Engineer in your DEC Region.

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