



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Date: 4/17/2020
To: Officials and Operators of Public Water Systems
From: MS State Department of Health
Bureau of Public Water Supply

COVID-19 Pandemic regarding the operational concerns and/or processes that have been modified in the ongoing response.

Water System Compliance Continues:

As an important reminder, compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act's (SDWA) rules and provisions **have not** been suspended during the COVID-19 Pandemic. All public water supplies are required to continue to perform water quality collection and sampling. The Mississippi Public Health Laboratory has reported that receipt of samples for this period of time is lower than normal. Sampling schedules have been set to ensure that samples can be collected and analyzed according to the requirements of the various SDWA rules. Failure to collect required samples will result in the issuance of violations. Please take the necessary steps to ensure that your system's samples are collected according to the instructions and during the appropriate compliance periods. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Pandemic Forms for Public Water Supplies:

With the advent of the ongoing response to the Pandemic, the Environmental Protection Agency, in conjunction with states, has expanded its incident action checklist catalog of support materials. The actions in this checklist are divided up into three "rip & run" sections and are examples of activities the water sector (drinking water and wastewater systems) can take to prepare for, respond to and recover from a pandemic. The guidance outlined in the checklists is expansive and may not apply to all types of water systems, but it is a strong baseline for water systems working through this time with the goal of ensuring that your water system continues to operate and meet the demands of its customers. For access to the checklists, follow the link below:

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

Additionally, the Bureau has attached to this email a template that can be used in lieu of or in conjunction with county emergency operation center (EOC) credentials to aid your utility in continuing to perform the vital operation and maintenance of your public water supply.

Drinking Water Operator and Backflow Assembly Tester Certifications:

In response to the Governor's Executive Order (EO) No. 1466 directing Mississippians to shelter in place except for performing designated essential activities and instructing essential businesses and operations to remain open, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the State Health Officer has issued a blanket extension of Licenses/Permits/Certifications for Essential Environmental Health Facilities and Services including the certification of Drinking Water Operators and Backflow Assembly Testers (BPAT). This extension is retroactive back to April 1, 2020. While this extension grants operator and BPAT certified individuals an extended certification period beyond what is outlined in the regulations, individuals should still strive to obtain the necessary CEUs when offered to ensure full compliance with the renewal requirements. See attached extension notification from Dr. Thomas Dobbs.

Necessary Supplies to Support Your Water System:

During the Pandemic, your utility may encounter situations where vital supplies such as chemicals, and distribution materials are difficult to obtain or availability is limited. As these situations arise please let the Bureau know. Our office, working with MEMA, may be able to assist your utility in getting vital supplies necessary to properly and safely operate your public water supply.

Minimal Use or No Use at Your Customers Facilities:

When the recovery phase begins on your public water supply, you may encounter situations where most of your commercial customers have closed temporarily or have been operating with minimal staff. When situations such as this occur, water in these building may have become stagnant. Stagnant water will have odor and taste issues as well as possible contamination. Situations like this will mirror a seasonal system during its start-up process. Here are some suggestions that the utility could consider moving forward:

Short-Term

1. Develop communication materials to distribute to building owners to inform them how COVID-19 may impact water quality in the distribution system.
2. Communicate to owners of large buildings about the need to maintain fresh water in plumbing.
3. Consider flushing water mains that serve commercial districts where buildings currently have low occupancy or are not being used.
4. Consider analyzing distribution system disinfectant residual data to identify portions of the system that are under-used to help target flushing. Temporarily expanding monitoring locations may better inform actions.
5. Ask building owners to report low or no water pressure to you immediately.

Longer-Term

1. Prioritize restoring water service to buildings for decommissioned health facilities, clinics, and long-term care facilities, and buildings serving vulnerable populations such as early childhood education facilities.
2. Consider continuing to flush water mains that serve commercial districts where buildings currently have low occupancy or are not being used.
3. Consider analyzing distribution system disinfectant residual data to identify portions of the system that are under-used to help target flushing. Temporarily expanding monitoring locations may better inform actions.
4. Coordinate building recommissioning so low pressure and depressurization do not occur when buildings become reoccupied.
5. Ask building owners to report low or no water pressure to you immediately.

For additional guidance associated with building water systems:

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

For other updates visit our website.

MS State Department of Health www.HealthyMS.com

or <http://HealthyMS.com/covid-19>

Bureau of Public Water Supply emergency/after hours (769)-798-4258

Normal business hours 8am-5pm (601) 576-7518