

General PWS Guidance

This is provided for Public Water Systems (PWS) and meant to help navigate the current pandemic and the ensuing 'shelter in place' order from the Governor. Utility workers are an essential workforce. As PWS operators you already know this. It is beneficial to reiterate that safe drinking water is paramount to the protection of public health and operators are on the frontlines. Especially during this situation, common sense must be employed in your everyday decision making, to both protect the public and our essential workforce. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to an individual PWS's circumstances. Please know that the Public Water Supply Bureau staff are continuing to work remotely to help ensure that PWS have the support they need during these unprecedented times. Please contact us to discuss compliance-related issues regarding temporary closures, sample site access, continuity of service, and reporting requirements. We can work with you to help maintain compliance while still meeting the intent of the rules and protecting public health.

We understand that you might be facing new challenges trying to balance everyday operating duties while still practicing social distancing. Normal sample sites may no longer be accessible. We have developed some alternative strategies to help navigate this sea of uncertainty we are all now living in:

- Bacteriological samples can be taken from pumphouses located in the distribution system
- Bacteriological samples can be taken from accessible sites in your distribution system which may not be identified on your sample site plan, eg. operators' homes, outside spigots
- Bacteriological samples can be taken by homeowners who have been instructed on proper sampling technique and approved by DEQ (this is to be used only as a last resort)
- Chlorine residual sample sites can also follow the above guidelines
- Lead & Copper and DBP sample sites that are no longer accessible can be replaced with sites that meet the same criteria as the original site (similar age of building construction)
 - Lead & Copper sites can be replaced from the existing pool of sample locations without any notification to DEQ
 - If a new sample site is needed, documentation of the change is required http://deq.mt.gov/Portals/112/Water/Forms/LC_ChangeLocation.pdf
- Changes in DBP sample sites should maintain similar water quality to the original sample site (similar water residence time in distribution system)
 - If the change is temporary and not likely to last longer than a single sample event, no sample location documentation is required
 - If the change is likely to last through the 3rd quarter monitoring period, documentation and communication with Brian Hogenson the DBP Rule Manager, is required http://deq.mt.gov/Portals/112/Water/Forms/2020Apr_ChangeofSamplingSiteforDBP.pdf

- Individual circumstances should be discussed with the rule manager. This can include the required number of samples, sample timeframes, etc.

As always, staff are available for specific questions and guidance. Please call with any issues you may be experiencing. If there is a specific staff member with whom you have a relationship, please reach out to them. If you have a concern regarding a specific rule, call that rule manager in the *Monitoring and Reporting Section*; for operations or treatment concerns, call one of our *Field Services Section* staff. Again, we are all working remotely, with technology that has sometimes proven to be difficult, so please bear with us and know that we will return calls and emails just as fast as we can. Public Water Supply Bureau staff contacts can be accessed from the following link.

<http://deq.mt.gov/Water/Resources/SectionContacts>

Please protect yourselves, your loved ones, and your neighbors by practicing the following guidelines for staying safe from COVID-19 recommended by the Centers for Disease Control:

Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>)