



WEST COUNTY  
WASTEWATER

## EMBRACING THE FUTURE BY PLANNING TODAY...

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**TO:** Board of Directors  
West County Wastewater

**DATE:** March 17, 2021

**REPORT BY:** Lisa Malek Zadeh, General Manager

**SUBMITTED BY:** Andrew Clough, Deputy General Manager

**AGENDA ITEM:** COVID Update

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### **SUMMARY**

The vaccine is being distributed, case numbers are declining, and many activities are returning. All of this is great news, but we are far from finished with the COVID-19 virus and its variants. West County Wastewater (WCW) implemented exposure controls in March 2020 and has continued to adjust and modify, but not relax these controls. WCW does not expect to relax our standards until at least the summer of 2021. The controls are working, the operations are continuing, projects are moving forward. We all look forward to a return to “normal”, but what that “normal” looks like is yet to be determined. In order to provide a safe work environment and maintain continuity of operations, WCW intends to be slow and deliberate in our process of relaxing standards.

The COVID-19 virus and its variants remain active and WCW continues to comply with all Orders issued by the Contra Costa County Health Officer to limit person-to-person contact and to restrict business activity in order to reduce the rate of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Offices remain closed to the public and the face covering and physical distancing requirements of the County Orders and the WCW COVID-19 Workplace Exposure Control Plan still apply.

Plans for safely bringing additional office staff back are underway, but will proceed slowly. The basic principles of protection (masks), physical distancing, and limiting the duration of person to person contact will continue. All employees reporting for work are required to perform an individual health check and report to their supervisor that they do not have any symptoms, have not been in direct contact with a person who has contracted COVID-19 etc. This practice will continue.

### **BACKGROUND**

On September 4, 2020, Contra Costa County Health Services issued an updated Social Distancing Order, HO-COVID19-27 (Order) that remains in effect until superseded or rescinded. The primary intent of the Order is to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the County and mitigate the impact on delivery of critical healthcare services. The Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the March 4, 2020, Proclamation of a State of Emergency issued by Governor Gavin Newsom and the March 10, 2020, Proclamation by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors declaring the existence of a local emergency.

### **Vaccine**

WCW continues to monitor the availability of the vaccine. Some Agencies have encouraged their staff to get the vaccine through a designation of “Emergency Services Worker”. This would allow a higher placement on the priority list for receiving the vaccine. These rules have been fluid and there are various interpretations. WCW staff are all “Disaster Services Workers” and are “Essential Workers” employed by an agency operating “Critical Infrastructure”, our staff do not meet the definition of “Emergency Services Worker”. We will continue to monitor the rules for vaccine priority and support and encourage our staff who choose to get vaccinated. While we encourage our staff to get vaccinated as it becomes available, we are not planning to require staff to be vaccinated. We will revise the policy if required by the State or if other risk factors make it necessary.

### **Testing**

WCW has arranged for COVID-19 testing services through a local facility. If testing is required, employees may request a test through their health care provider or go to the local testing facility. The facility is conveniently located and can reduce the time required to obtain results.

### **Reporting and Monitoring Requirements**

**SB 1159:** Amends existing workers’ compensation laws to address the impact of employees who contract COVID-19 and the extent that such illness is considered industrial, and therefore entitles the employee to workers’ compensation benefits. Human Resources is required to report **Positive** COVID Tests within three days of knowledge of the positive test.

**AB 685:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on maintaining a safe workplace, AB 685 amends the Labor Code in several areas to require employers to adhere to stricter occupational health and safety rules and empowers Cal/OSHA with expanded enforcement powers to address these standard. WCW is also required to notice employees if we are informed of a potential exposure to COVID-19.

All staff who work onsite must communicate with their supervisor each day that they are symptom-free of COVID. The information is captured on **Weekly Wellness Log** that Human Resources monitors and is available to CAL-OSHA if requested.

### **Communication**

WCW continues to reinforce the messages regarding maintaining a safe work environment. Attachment A is a copy of a new poster that WCW created congratulating employees for staying safe, wearing their masks, and reinforcing what WCW is doing to keep employees safe and healthy.

### **COVID-19 Leave**

Effective 12/31/20, the emergency benefits through the Families First Coronavirus Act expired. WCW is updating our policy regarding the use of COVID-19 Admin Leave. It is available to staff who have been asked to not be at work for a variety of reasons; including, shift changes to reduce the density of work units and time off if potentially exposed to COVID-19 at the workplace.

### **Future Plans**

Employee work schedules and arrangements have been adjusted to allow for a significant number of employees to work remotely. Collections, Maintenance and Operations schedules have been adjusted to alter the length and timing of shifts to reduce potential exposure pathways. WCW plans to “normalize” many of these changes, as they are expected to remain in place through at least early summer 2021, and perhaps much longer.

Many of the changes will become permanent as we have found some of the new working arrangements to prove more productive and less resource intensive; for example, many of the remote work arrangements, online permitting, and increased use of software work management tools. Space planning evaluations are being reviewed and will be implemented to create more “distance” in the workplace. Long term remote work arrangements are expected to be employed, balancing the need for time in the office and for reducing the density of people in the office.

Collections, Maintenance and Operations schedules will be regularly evaluated and updated to provide for an effective and safe work environment. Changes and modifications will continue to be discussed and coordinated with impacted staff and union representatives. These schedule changes have an impact and can be challenging and demanding to implement. The efforts and cooperative nature of these changes is greatly appreciated.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Long term fiscal impact remains unknown, but tracking of hours spent and supplies required to respond to COVID-19 crisis is being completed in case federal or state funds become available to offset the economic impact. WCW does not anticipate a significant reduction in revenues.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:**

A. COVID Poster

# Congratulations to ALL!!

Let's Continue to Wear a Mask to Protect You and Me

## Practice good hygiene



- Use non-contact greeting methods



- Wash hands frequently



- We **disinfect** all surfaces



- **Avoid touching your face** and cover coughs



- **Increase ventilation** by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

## Limit meetings and non-essential travels

Use **Video conferencing** or hold meetings in **well-ventilation** space

**Suspend all non-essential travel**



Attachment A: COVID Poster (COVID UPDATE)

## Stay home if...

- You are **feeling sick**
- You have a **sick family member** at home



## Take care of your emotional and mental well-being

Outbreaks are a stressful and anxious time for everyone. We're here to support you! Reach out to [hr@wcvd.org](mailto:hr@wcvd.org) anytime.