

# Rural Water Issues Advisory [3/16/20]

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**President Declares Emergency on March 13, 2020:** Action allows FEMA to provide emergency protective measures not authorized under other federal law. President “*encourages all State and local governments to activate their Emergency Operations Centers and to review their emergency preparedness plans* ([White House](#)).”

## **U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Water:**

- The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water. 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.
- The risk of transmission of COVID-19 from the feces of an infected person is also unknown. The risk is expected to be low, however, based on data from previous outbreaks of related coronaviruses. There have been no reports of fecal-oral transmission of COVID-19 to date.
- At this time, the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 through sewage systems is thought to be low. Although transmission of COVID-19 through sewage may be possible, there is no evidence to date that this has occurred. SARS, a similar coronavirus, has been detected in untreated sewage for up to 2 to 14 days with documented transmission associated with sewage aerosols (source: [CDC](#)).

**NRWA Statement on the COVID-19 Virus** ([March 9, 2020](#)): “*All water and wastewater utilities [should] review the best and latest information from [CDC](#), [OSHA](#), [WHO](#), [CISA](#) for drinking water and sanitation... Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic conditions play an essential role in protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 outbreak.*”

**Local governments Take the Lead, Collaborate, and Improvise to Manage Crisis** ([Boston Globe](#)). Mayors Making Decisions on [Water Safety](#), Prohibiting [Evictions](#), [Emergency Power](#), Open Meeting Law Exemptions, [Curfews](#), Schools [Closings](#), etc. **Mayors Tell the Public Their Water is Safe** ([Los Angeles](#)). **Pandemic Tests Local Emergency Powers:** The Champaign (IL) City Council gives mayor and city manager power to impose curfew and water rationing, seize private property, and force business closures among a litany of emergency powers granted in response to the global health crisis. Responding to swift backlash, city tweets denying any intent to use many of the new powers ([news](#)). **New York City Shuts Down:** Bars and restaurants closed in New York City and elsewhere, shutting down more school systems, and recommending a limit on gatherings of 50 people or more for the next eight weeks ([NYTimes Live](#)).

**Utilities Placing Moratoriums on Drinking Water Shutoffs/Disconnections During Pandemic** ([Twitter](#)). **Wisconsin and Connecticut Order Water Utilities Not to Disconnect Residential Service During the Ongoing Public Health Emergency** ([WI State Journal](#)). Utilities in New York and New Jersey have voluntarily agreed to the moratoriums. No orders from the Public Service Commissions are expected.

**City Response to What if Water Workers are Quarantined, Will Water Still be Supplied? (A)** “*Water is an essential service and the water utility is well-prepared to manage its response to COVID-19. The water utility has an existing emergency response plan and is continuing to modify and update, as needed, in response to the most current available information. The water department has back-up power and in emergency situations, can be operated with a small number of staff* ([Purcellville, VA](#)).”

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## **National Rural Water Association**

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**The National Rural Water Association** is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.

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