

Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 precautions at ReWA

Can COVID-19 exist in wastewater or drinking water?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, there is no current evidence that the COVID-19 virus survives the disinfection process for drinking water and wastewater. It's important to remember the following:

- The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water.
- The risk of transmission through feces is expected to be low based on data from previous outbreaks of related coronaviruses, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).
- At this time, the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through sewer systems is extremely low.

But can I get COVID-19 from wastewater or sewage?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that there is no evidence to date that COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewerage systems, with or without wastewater treatment.

Do wastewater treatment plants treat COVID-19?

Yes, wastewater treatment plants treat viruses and other pathogens. COVID-19 is a type of virus that is particularly susceptible to disinfection. Standard treatment and disinfectant processes at wastewater treatment plants are expected to be effective.

Will my septic system treat COVID-19?

While decentralized wastewater treatment (i.e., septic tanks) do not disinfect, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) expects a properly managed septic system to treat COVID-19 the same way it safely manages other viruses often found in wastewater. Additionally, when properly installed, a septic system is located at a distance and location designed to avoid impacting a water supply well.



Are you taking any special precautions at ReWa because of COVID-19?

COVID-19–specific protections aren't recommended or required for employees involved in wastewater management operations, including those at wastewater treatment facilities. However, we will continue in our adherence to best practice management to ensure safety and security for our employees, our customers and the community.

But what are ReWa's standard procedures for ensuring health and safety?

Water resource recovery facility operations at ReWa ensure that our team follows the established best management practices to prevent exposure to wastewater. These include using engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater.

Are any ReWa facilities open to the public?

Water resource recovery facility operations at ReWa ensure that our team follows the established best management practices to prevent exposure to wastewater. These include using engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater.

May I come to the ReWa office?

This developing situation calls for immediate and careful action. At this time, we have made the decision to close our facilities for the next two weeks, effective, Monday, March 16. All tours of ReWa facilities have also been postponed until further notice.

Who do I call with questions or emergencies?

We can always be reached at (864) 299-4000 during normal business hours, or, after-hours, at (864) 299-4004. We will also post updates to our website at rewaonline.org.

Is ReWa changing any of its customer service procedures?

ReWa will not disconnect any customer's service for non-payment, in order to give customers experiencing financial hardship extra time to make payments. Customers should pay what they can to avoid building up a large balance that will be harder to pay off later.

Are ReWa employees in the office?

- Through a carefully planned process, ReWa has directed employees who are not involved with critical functions and wastewater operations to work from home, where possible. If ReWa staff needs to interact with customers in-person in response to potential sewer-service emergencies, they will follow the CDC's safety guidelines, including social distancing.
- Services and meetings that are not urgent or time-sensitive but require in-person customer contact by ReWa employees, will be rescheduled. ReWa will contact customers to reschedule those appointments.
- Be aware of scammers, who continue to target customers by threatening disconnection of service and asking for immediate payment over the phone. ReWa will never ask for personal information over the phone or demand payment using money orders or gift cards.

Where do I go for more information?

- Visit rewaonline.org for complete customer information related to wastewater services, including answers to frequently asked questions. We will post customer-related updates to our homepage. You may also visit our social media platforms to get quick updates on Facebook and Twitter.

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