

# FLORIDA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

2970 WELLINGTON CIRCLE • TALLAHASSEE, FL 32309-7813  
(850) 668-2746

December 3, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor of Florida  
400 S Monroe St  
Tallahassee FL 32399

Re: Florida COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

Dear Governor DeSantis:

The Florida Rural Water Association (FRWA), its Board of Directors and over 1,750 utility members, appreciate the Governor and the Departments of Environmental Protection and Health for your efforts in dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the citizens of the State of Florida. To aid in these efforts, FRWA is requesting that public utility personnel working for water and wastewater utilities in Florida receive high priority when vaccinations become available in Florida.

We also recognize and appreciate the effort required to establish Florida's COVID-19 Vaccination Plan and understand that the successful delivery of the developing vaccines will be critical in gaining control over the virus and returning our state and nation to some sense of normalcy.

Florida's drinking water and wastewater managers, operators and other supporting staff have been classified as essential workers under CISA Guidance on Essential Workers Version 4.0, which states that water and wastewater system operational staff and workers repairing, monitoring and sampling, as well as other important staff functions, are critical to protecting the public health, environment, and bolster the economy in every Florida Community, especially during this pandemic.

It is imperative that water and wastewater utilities continue to fully function, around the clock, to ensure that proper hygiene is maintained, especially amid this pandemic. Some utilities have had to deal with the virus directly as staff have become infected, as well as adhering to the quarantine protocols established nationally and here in Florida through the Governor's office. However, we know of no instances where water or wastewater service has not been maintained by our conscientious utilities and their essential workers.

Therefore, we are requesting that due consideration be given to assigning high priority for all water and wastewater personnel in Florida COVID-19 Vaccination Plan. Florida's water and wastewater utilities stand ready to continue protecting public health as we recover from the pandemic.

Further, critical water utilities personnel are first responders in emergency events at their utilities and in mutual aid efforts to help other damaged water utilities to restore full services as soon as possible. For water utilities to recover quickly, those from within the water utilities are the best to help other damaged utilities in Florida and Florida water utility personnel are the best in the nation.

Respectfully,

Gary Williams  
Executive Director

CC Noah Valenstein, Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Scott A Rivkees MD, Florida Department of Health

GW/bc

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EMAIL  
[frwa@frwa.net](mailto:frwa@frwa.net)

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