Hello everyone. These are trying times for many of us because, while we are not yet in crisis mode, this step of wait-and-see/shelter at home brings its own issues and questions. I’ve heard from many of you over the last few weeks and felt it was time to send one message to all of you with the information I have.

WDNR Drinking Water Program has been part of information sharing with other states and EPA Region 5 and we are working on many levels to send out messages as decisions are made. This will likely be through GovDelivery. In the meantime, if you have questions that are not covered below or from past statewide message from other agencies, please email me and I will get an answer and send an update to everyone. For now, here’s what I have for you:

1 DNR Protocols
   a. No in person sanitary surveys or start-up inspections are being conducted until further notice. Critical start-up inspections may be conducted using technology available on smart phones. Portions of sanitary surveys may be conducted through smart phone technology, telephone conversations and electronic submittals of documents by the operator, with on-site follow-up conducted once we are back to normal operations.
   b. All submittals to Madison and Field Offices are to be electronic.
   c. All mailings from DNR staff to you are electronic with paper copies to follow at some future date.
   d. All of my outgoing email to you now includes a deliver/read receipt request. This is being put in place to document deliveries in lieu of postal mailings.

2 Outstanding Deficiencies – if you have upcoming due dates for corrective actions/deficiencies identified in the department’s most recent sanitary survey and due to the state’s COVID-19 response you will not be able to complete the required work, contact me for an extension. Your request must be sent to me prior to the due date in order to avoid a violation.

3 Lead and Copper Monitoring Site Plan Updates – the department is not requiring further on-site materials inventory at this time for monitoring site locations. If you have not completed your inventory updates to the active lead and copper sites, please send in your spreadsheet now. In the comment field, include a comment noting whether or not you were able to confirm lead solder on copper piping and if the sample tap is filtered or softened.

4 Daily Tasks
   a. Ensure an adequate supply of materials such as treatment chemicals, but also test reagents, lab standards, and generator fuel.
   b. Due to limited deliveries by chemical companies, during the COVID-19 response, it is acceptable to have more than a 30-day supply on hand. This is limited to the duration of the response.
   c. Perform solo visits to facilities. Practice social distancing.
   d. Stagger visits by visiting systems during times when other individuals are not present.
   e. Have contingencies in place including appropriately certified professional backups and personnel knowledgeable of the system.
   f. Disinfect common surfaces before and after shift changes for shared vehicles, office space, restrooms etc.

4 Cross Connection Inspections, Meter Replacement, and Other Tasks Requiring Customer Interaction – Follow the Department of Heath guidelines for social distancing. The department will use enforcement discretion on a case by case basis regarding late or missed inspections due to Wisconsin’s COVID-19 response.

5 Sampling
   a. IOC/SOC/RAD/VOC these are annual samples from EP taps so get them in ASAP.
b. Bacti
   i. use nearby/same pressure zone sites – shot for towers, well houses with service lines coming back in, booster stations and use hose bibbs as a last resort.
   ii. for systems that deliver samples to the laboratory, consider condensing sampling during this time to reduce contact with lab personnel.

c. DBPs - if access is not available, use nearby sites as close as possible – email the exact location to me so I can make a temporary change to your Monitoring Site Plan. Sampling at the original location will resume once the COVID-19 response is over.

d. Lead and Copper
   i. Since most systems can’t start until June and the monitoring period goes through September, there’s time.
   ii. For those on semi-annual monitoring, you may no longer be collecting these samples at this time; however the sampling period goes until June 30, so again there may still be time.

e. Monitoring and Reporting Violations – In consultation with EPA, the department cannot waive violations related to the COVID-19 response. NOTE: a monitoring and reporting violation requires a public notice to be issued within one year. This is typically issued as part of the Consumer Confidence Report so there is time to determine, in consultation with EPA, the appropriate follow up. At this point, only lead and copper sampling is in jeopardy.

6 Operator Certification
a. May exams – don’t know yet but plan on them being cancelled. We are currently booking additional space for the August test to accommodate everyone that likely won’t be testing in May.

b. License renewal – we are working through the legal process to suspend the continuing education and renewal requirements until the health emergency is ended. Official communication regarding this will be coming out directly to operators and water systems.

c. Rural Water staff are available to cover for certified staff. This can be an arrangement where they are available by phone for non-certified staff to consult with or even observe via smart phone applications.

7 Monthly Reports
a. I don’t expect any issues with operators being able to submit the report by the 10th of the following month, but recommend you set up a backup operator to submit reports in case of illness. To do this go to the DNR Switchboard and CREATE WAMS ID in order to access the Wisconsin Web Access Management System (WAMS), where monthly operating reports are retrieved. Each operator must have their own ID in order for the department to track who is submitting the reports. Once a WAMS ID has been obtained, go back into the switchboard and REQUEST ACCESS to your water system. You will have to sign a form and submit it to our Madison office. Once received and processed, the operator will receive an email with additional instructions.
   
   b. Recommend reporting daily data directly via photo/text/email to a central location DAILY in addition to the on-site bench sheet. This will make retrieval of the data for monthly reporting more seamless in the event of an illness.

8 Construction – currently allowed under the Gov last directive. We have no additional advice other than to follow internal, local, and state guidance/orders regarding business travel and on-site inspections or work.

9 Turning on Water for Seasonal Customers - PSC is the regulating authority; contact them at: (608) 266-3766 or, preferably, at PSCConsumerAffairsMail@wisconsin.gov
Looking for Something To Do Right Now? Idle hands leads to active imaginations, so keep calm and give your staff something to do.

a. Update your Emergency Operations Plan. Make sure your contact list is up to date, improve and/or add documents that may be needed in the pandemic like step by step instructions for everything you do, take photos or videos of your facilities with a narration of operations and critical maintenance tasks.

b. Evaluate your Communications Plan and consider preparing communication materials for the public about virus transmission in drinking water. The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies. Based on current evidence, the risk to water supplies is low. Americans can continue to use and drink water from their tap as usual. Both CDC and EPA have useful information on their websites.

c. Review Mutual Aid Agreements and update contact information for nearby communities.

d. Cross train staff in essential work operations.

e. Identify retired/former employees to determine if they could help, if needed.

f. Work on your Consumer Confidence Report.

g. Inventory of the pipe material in your distribution system. Leave off the premise plumbing if it requires in-home inspection, but otherwise pull out all the boxes in the store rooms and cards in the files and start a spreadsheet.

h. Collect annual EP samples.

i. Watch some training videos. Consider overdue health and safety training, videos on tick safety, share articles you’ve been meaning to read, watch Featured Videos: Pump Curves and Pump Selection Basics, check out http://wateroperator.org/ for other videos.

Resources

a. DNR websites
   i. WDNR Drinking Water Home Page
   ii. WDNR Operator Certification Home Page

b. COVID 19 websites
   i. Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) COVID-19 website
   ii. Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center (WaterISAC) website on COVID-19
   iii. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Water Transmission and COVID-19
   iv. US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) COVID19 Drinking water and wastewater website
   v. World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 Pandemic website

Each of you has an important and critical role in providing safe drinking water to your community. Please take care of yourself, including your mental health, in these strange and new times. If you have questions, need a break or reality check, give me a call.

We are committed to service excellence.
Visit our survey at http://dnr.wi.gov/customersurvey to evaluate how I did.

Wendy Anderson, P.E. Water Supply Engineer – Drinking and Groundwater Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 2984 Shawano Avenue, Green Bay, WI 54313 Office Phone: (920) 662-5414 Cell Phone: (920) 360-0462

wendy.anderson@wisconsin.gov dnr.wi.gov