



March 18, 2020

Dear Wastewater System Official,

As you are aware, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt issued an emergency declaration for all 77 counties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical at this time that wastewater collection systems and treatment works continue to operate and protect public health and the environment. These key systems include Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs), collection systems, water reuse systems, industrial pretreatment systems, and industrial wastewater systems.

As a wastewater system official, you play a critical role in protecting public health and the environment. The continued practice of maintaining disinfection and operating wastewater treatment plants and systems correctly is necessary to fulfill this essential role. DEQ and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have established treatment requirements that prevent waterborne pathogens, such as viruses, from endangering public health and the environment. These treatment requirements, including routine disinfection processes, are expected to be effective against COVID-19 (coronavirus).

DEQ encourages your wastewater system to train additional personnel on the basic functions of your system and to develop relationships with neighboring systems to ensure continuity of operations. POTWs may want to sign up for SoonerWARN, an electronic system to request assistance or sign up on the list of operators that could aid other POTW systems, at www.soonerwarn.org for cooperative sharing of resources in times of emergency. If you have difficulties accessing SoonerWARN, contact the Oklahoma Rural Water Association (ORWA) at 1-405-672-8925.

Even during the emergency declaration all permit conditions remain in effect. However, due to changing operating conditions, DEQ recommends that you contact the laboratory used for analyzing routine samples to verify that they will be receiving samples before submitting them. If your regular laboratory is not receiving samples, the DEQ State Environmental Laboratory may be able to assist you. You can reach the State Environmental Lab at 1-405-702-1000. It is important to keep in mind that a laboratory may be able to analyze some analytes, but not others, depending on personnel and resources.

If you anticipate difficulty in completing sampling requirements or submitting Discharge Monitoring Reports during this emergency situation, please contact your DEQ Wastewater Enforcement Coordinator for guidance at the phone numbers below. Any disruptions you encounter in sample collection, sample analysis, or reporting results should be documented and submitted to DEQ.

Municipal Wastewater Coordinators: 1-405-702-8220 (north half of state) or 1-405-702-8138 (south half of state).

Industrial Wastewater Enforcement Coordinators: 1-405-702-8146 (north half of state) or 1-405-702-8243 (south half of state).

Sanitary sewer overflows/bypasses and wastewater emergencies must still be reported to DEQ. Please report any bypasses to DEQ at 1-800-256-2634 or 405-702-8217. Report any bypasses, emergencies or noncompliance which may endanger public health or the environment within 24 hours to DEQ at 1-800-256-2365 or 405-702-8290 (Oklahoma City Metro Area), including the following:

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- (a) Any unanticipated bypass which exceeds any effluent limitation in the permit;
- (b) Any upset which exceeds any effluent limitation in the permit;
- (c) Any violation of a maximum daily discharge limit for any of the pollutants listed in Part I, Section A of the permit; and,
- (d) Any bypass in the collection system [sanitary sewer overflow (SSO)].

DEQ is coordinating with our state and federal partners, including the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We will provide updated information as it becomes available.

For more information on COVID-19 from the EPA, please visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>

For more information on COVID-19 from the CDC, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

DEQ will continue to provide technical assistance as appropriate during this emergency. Your DEQ Water Quality Division Wastewater Enforcement Coordinator and District Engineer can both be reached at 1-405-702-8100.

You can also contact your local environmental specialist in the DEQ Environmental Complaints and Local Services Division (ECLS). Contact information for your local ECLS office can be found at <https://www.deq.ok.gov/deq-local-offices/> or by calling 1-405-702-6100.

DEQ is prepared to assist Oklahoma wastewater systems during this difficult time. Because we care about your and your family's health, DEQ encourages your wastewater system to work with us remotely via email and phone during this emergency. However, in cases where immediate onsite assistance from DEQ is needed, our staff will make every reasonable effort to assist in a manner that is safe for both DEQ and wastewater system staff. Thank you for partnering with DEQ to protect public health and the environment during this time.

Sincerely,

Shellie R. Chard, Director

Water Quality Division