

COVID-19

WASTEWATER WORKERS

What you need to know

Wastewater treatment plant operations should ensure workers follow routine practices to prevent exposure to hazardous biological agents in wastewater. These include using engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater. General precautions in line with COVID-19 are recommended at this stage for employees involved in wastewater management operations, including those at wastewater treatment facilities.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD

- Provide easily accessible hand-wash stations with soap and water or hand sanitisers where hand-washing is not possible
- Provide soap in shower/change rooms
- Encourage workers to stay home if unwell
- Ensure social distancing of workers to avoid transmission
- Ensure vaccinations (e.g. tetanus, polio, Hepatitis A & B) for workers are up-to-date



IMPLEMENTING THE HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS FOR WASTEWATER WORKER PROTECTION

ENGINEERING CONTROLS

- Use physical barriers to prevent worker exposure to splashes or sprays of contaminated wastewater
- Enclose processes that may generate potentially infectious aerosols
- Use natural or mechanical ventilation to remove contaminated air from the work environment

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS AND SAFE WORK PRACTICES

- Avoid ingesting, swallowing and/or breathing in wastewater spray or mist
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, mouth with unwashed hands
- Cover open sores and cuts with clean, dry bandages
- Wash hands using soap and water (~20 sec) or sanitise using 70% alcohol hand sanitiser after handling wastewater, before eating or drinking, and before and after using the toilet
- Remove work clothes before eating and eat in designated areas
- Remove work clothes before leaving the worksite

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Provide proper PPE for workers as informed by risk assessment
- Provide training for workers on the use, storage, cleaning, maintenance and disposal of PPE
- Provide disinfectants to clean contaminated PPE

What should I do if I suspect I have COVID-19

- Alert your supervisor immediately
- Contact your healthcare provider
- Avoid contact with people

