COVID RESPONSE for WASWD MEMBERS – March 19, 2020

ACTION ITEMS

- Identify and make a list of methods to limit public exposure
- Identify best approach for Board meetings
- Determine essential positions and communicate to staff
- Determine feasibility of emergency pay and leave for employees
- Post signs reminding employees to wash hands and cover coughs with inner elbow
- Determine responsible staff to disinfect all hand-operated equipment, counters, and areas exposed to human contact twice daily, at a minimum
- Determine best approach for emergency-related late payments that supports crisis without encouraging repeat offenders
- Communicate with the public (see below)
- Longer term: investigate various emergency preparation and mitigation procedures, institute training and/or specific measures as needed, and document processes for use in alternate emergency situations

COMMUNICATION PATHWAYS

- Post publicly visible signage about facility closures; this can include prominent signs on front door and other public access areas; a sandwich board sign at the parking lot entrance(s); and a roadside reader board.
- Update website home page with a basic emergency message (see page 2); consider including additional messages (also on page 2).
- If you maintain a blog, consider creating a blog post providing a brief overview of your action plan for public reassurance, and/or blog posts about the additional messages.
- If you have no website, post to your Facebook page.
- If you have no Facebook page, start a basic one (instructions on page 3).
- Consider creating and sending out a letter or direct mailer to all ratepayers.
- Consider creating and distributing a public announcement flyer (email and/or print and post on public bulletin boards and at local retail businesses).
- Send a press release / announcement to your local / city / neighborhood news blog.
- Add basic and additional message(s) to your next and ongoing billing inserts.
- Add basic and additional message(s) to your next newsletter.

BASIC MESSAGE TO ALL

_____(name of district) is taking all steps necessary to provide safe and reliable water and sewer services for the duration of this emergency.

> Our primary goal during the novel coronavirus / COVID-19 outbreak is to ensure continuity of service, including _____(safe water supply / safe water supply and sewer operations / safe sewer operations), inspections, critical maintenance, finances, and customer service.

Office is Closed

> For everyone's safety, we are keeping our front doors closed and locked. Please make payments using _____ (state available methods; e.g., the drop box by the front door, the drive-through window); you are also welcome to pay online or via U.S. mail.

ADDITIONAL MESSAGES

TAP WATER IS SAFE AND AVAILABLE:

The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in tap water. Standard procedures for tap water filtration, disinfection, and treatment removes or inactivate the virus. Bottled water is not required to meet the same standards as tap water, it's much more expensive, and both the manufacturing and resulting empty plastic bottles are terrible for our environment. Tap water is the safest, least expensive, and most environmentally sound way to remain hydrated.

SEWER SYSTEM RISK IS LOW:

Current data suggests that standard municipal wastewater treatment practices are sufficient to inactivate coronaviruses. The CDC is reviewing all data on COVID-19 transmission pathways, and believes the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 through sewer systems is low.

DO NOT FLUSH WIPES!

Please dispose of wipes in the garbage. The last thing you need during a public emergency is a clogged sewer and the resulting expensive repairs. "Flushable and disposable" wipes—including baby wipes, disinfecting "pop up" wipes, paper towels, and even small make-up remover wipes—are the #1 cause of a clogged sewer line. If you own your home, the cost of repairing a clogged sewer line is yours, not your utility district's.

CUSTOMER FINANCIAL RELIEF:

In recognition of the pandemic's economic impact, special purpose districts are also considering and implementing financial relief for customers that may include waived late fees, deferred shut-offs, and incremental payment plans to help customers through this difficult time. [Inform customers of your specific actions]

BE INFORMED:
The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) CDC has a website page dedicated to COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has a specific FAQ page regarding COVID-19 and municipal water and sewer systems.
DOH link: https://www.doh.wa.gov/emergencies/coronavirus
CDC link: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html

STAY IN TOUCH:
We want to be able to reach our customers with important updates and information. You can add your emergency contact information to your account by emailing us at _____, or calling us at _____. Your information would only be used for emergency announcement purposes.

SETTING UP A FACEBOOK PAGE

Getting Started:

Do NOT create a "faux" email address / login for your District's Facebook page. If you do this, you run the risk of Facebook discovering that it's not a valid identity, and deleting your page permanently / irretrievably. Instead, simply log in as yourself to create a business page. Don't worry, Facebook will keep your identity private whenever you are posting to your page—your posts will appear to come "from the page," not "from you."

Collect the 2 graphics you'll need for steps 6 and 7, along with some brief written text (in electronic format, if possible) that describes your District for step 9. If you've collected these things in advance, it should take you roughly 20 minutes to set up your page.

Specific Steps:

1. Go to facebook.com/pages/create
2. Choose the "Business or Brand" page type
3. Fill in your page name: if you have a website, it's good to be consistent with your website URL, e.g. if your website is www.blueskyutility.com, make your page name blueskyutility
4. Fill in your category: Facebook has limited options, e.g., there is no 'Special Purpose District,' and no 'Sewer Utility' ("Waste Management" relates to trash, not sewage), but 'Water Utility Company' and 'Public Utility Company' are both available.
5. Fill in your address and phone number. I recommend you keep your address visible.
6. Add a profile picture: this is where you upload your District's logo. You'll have the option to resize it as needed during the upload.
7. Add a cover photo: this is the large horizontal "masthead" image that goes across the top of your Facebook page. Options for this image could include an exterior photo of your

building, a photo of your largest reservoir, an aerial photo of your water source, or a photo of a recognizable natural feature, such as a river, lake, or mountain, that symbolizes your service area. It's best if the image is already horizontal.

8. Skip the "online bookings" option by clicking the "not now" button.

9. Your basic page is now created, and it's time to fill in a few more details. At the top of the page, click the "Edit Page Info" link to complete the following:

    a) Fill in the "Description" field with 3 sentences (255 characters) about your District.
    b) Fill in your website URL if you have one.
    c) Add your District's general contact / info email address.
    d) Add your service area.
    e) Add your business hours.
    f) Leave Impressum, Price Range, and Privacy Policy blank (fill in later, if you wish).

10. When you've finished Step 9, scroll back up to the top of the page and click "Page" (over on the far left). Facebook will now bring up an alert box, encouraging you to "invite your friends to like your page." If you have employees who are already on Facebook, this would be a good time to invite them. If you have other public agency colleagues who you are friends with on Facebook, that's another option for invitations. If you can't think of anyone just yet, simply click the "X" to close the blue alert window for now.

11. Although there are a number of additional set-up levels (e.g., Our Story / About, Team Members, and Facebook's "Automatically Respond to New Messages" function), come back to these later. You're now ready to create your first post. Scroll down to the section titled "Create Post." Type something, click the "Photo/Video" icon to add an image (images make your posts more visible to more people), and click the blue "Post" button to publish it. Don't worry, you can edit or delete this post afterwards, by clicking the three dots at the top right of your published post to bring up the associated drop-down menu.

PROMOTING A FACEBOOK PAGE

*   Add your Facebook link to your website (if you have one), and as a footer at the end of your blog posts, e.g., For up to the minute announcements, follow our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/yourutility
*   If you send a letter or direct mailer to all ratepayers with your emergency announcements / information, include a statement similar to the above.
*   If you create a public announcement flyer for local bulletin boards / retail businesses, include a Facebook icon graphic and a statement similar to the above.
*   If you send a press release / announcement to your local / city / neighborhood news blog, be sure to include a statement at the end (using the blog example above).
*   Include a Facebook statement / URL on all future billing inserts and newsletters.

- If you have a few ratepayers that you communicate with regularly, let them know you've set up a new Facebook page, and encourage them to tell their neighbors.
- From Facebook, use the search function to find the Facebook pages of local businesses, neighborhood associations, and related public agencies. Visit each of their pages, click on the 'message' link, and send them a direct / private message with a link to your Facebook page, asking them to let their page followers know you've set up a new page for announcement purposes during emergencies.
- Future: create a "follow us on Facebook" flyer and post it at your front desk.
- Optional: pay Facebook to promote / advertise your page within a selected area.