



THANK YOU

Steven Grimm | Wastewater Technician

Every day we hear and see the well-deserved accolades for our Essential Workers that helped us throughout this pandemic and continue to help us as we travel the road back toward normalcy. Thank you, doctors and nurses. Thank you, first responders. Thank you, truck drivers, grocery store clerks and garbage men. I also want to thank them for their selfless acts and devotion to serving the greater good.

One group of Essential Workers that seem to get overlooked is our water and wastewater professionals. I want to take this moment to thank you all for your dedication and devotion protecting public health and the environment by providing safe drinking water and uninterrupted wastewater treatment throughout these chaotic times.

Right from the start there was confusion. Are you considered “Essential” or are you not? I know of several instances where the operation specialists were initially told to go home because they were not “Essential”. The government issued its list of essential workers and water and wastewater operations specialists were included on that list. In an effort to ensure continuity of operations should an operations specialist become ill, facilities began operating on limited, split and/or rotating shifts. Many facilities were staffed by only one person per shift. Unfortunately, in an industry that is considered one of the most dangerous (slips and falls), this is not uncommon. Many operations specialists worked without any time off. Talk about dedication!

Some facilities experienced a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks and hand sanitizer just as questions of the viability of the virus in water began to appear. It was determined early on that the drinking water disinfection process deactivated the virus, and that it probably wouldn't survive long in the waste stream. Then came the stories of tracking Covid-19 in wastewater and more questions and concerns arose. Is it infectious in the waste stream or not? There is still no definitive proof either way. The best advice is to continue to take the same precautions you've always taken. Wear gloves; wash your hands often, shower and change clothes before leaving the facility.

Now as we slowly begin to reopen and get back to a somewhat normal way of life, operations specialists are faced with another consequence of the pandemic, that of revenue shortfalls. With so many businesses closed and people out of work, sewer and water bills have gone unpaid. Unfortunately, it still costs the same to provide the water and sewer services. With

little or no money coming in, operations specialists are being told to cut expenses and put together “bare bones” budgets. Some capital improvement projects have been put on hold even as the infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

These are just some of the issues our water and wastewater professionals have faced and continue to face during these trying times. It sure would be nice to see a big billboard out there saying, “THANK YOU WATER and WASTEWATER PROFESSIONALS”. Until then I'll say WELL DONE! THANK YOU. 💧💧