

COVID-19/Impacts on Water Sector: American Water Works Association Survey



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The American Water Works Association (“AWWA”) undertook a survey of member utilities and other sector organizations to gauge the impacts of COVID-19 on the water sector.

AWWA states the survey was conducted online and encompassed the period March 25-30, 2020.

The organization summarized the following responses in terms of numbers:

Total Responses: 615

Utility Responses: 534

Unique Utilities: 532

Non-Utility Responses: 81

The survey results included:

- Utilities are responding quickly to the COVID-19 crisis to ensure essential operations
- Virtually all utilities have plans to continue essential field and plant operations for employees that can't work from home and almost 90% have a Business Continuity Plan in place or being developed
- Larger utilities more likely to be identifying internal staff to help operate plants, while small to medium utilities more likely to be collaborating with other nearby utilities to request or supply staff to ensure essential operations continue
- The two most pressing challenges for utilities are social distancing of workforce and supply chain issues for PPE
- Canadian utilities surveyed are facing many of the same current and anticipated challenges as U.S. utilities
- Close to 2/3rd of utilities surveyed are expecting to see financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in the coming months
- Over half the systems surveyed anticipate workforce absenteeism will impact operations within the next months; most will be able to maintain essential functions with absenteeism levels under 25%
- Utilities are taking steps to help their customers: More than 90% have suspended water shut-offs and nearly 2/3rd suspended late payment fees and are communicating to the public that drinking water is safe and what can be flushed down toilets
- Some utilities are taking other steps to assist their customers in the economic fallout of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Among other concerns, some utilities express worry that inability to access to sampling sites and labs could affect regulatory compliance
- About 80% of service providers are anticipating revenue generation/cash flow challenges in the coming months

A copy of the survey results can be downloaded [here](#).