

## **Orange County Water District is responding to the novel coronavirus outbreak (updated 3/20/20)**

In an abundance of caution and to safeguard the health and safety of its employees, the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) is responding to the novel coronavirus outbreak by implementing measures to reduce the risk of workplace transmission.

### **What is the novel coronavirus?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 70 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a “[public health emergency of international concern](#)” (PHEIC). On January 31, 2020, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency (PHE) for the United States to aid the nation’s healthcare community in responding to COVID-19. On March 11, 2020 WHO publicly characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. On March 13, 2020 President Trump issued a proclamation on declaring a national emergency concerning the COVID-19 outbreak. On March 19, 2020 Governor Gavin Newsom issued a stay at home order to protect the health and well-being of all Californians and to establish consistency across the state in order to slow the spread of COVID-19.

### **OCWD’s response plan**

- Employees are to stay home when sick, except to get medical care
- Employees are to inform management if they have been exposed to the virus or show [symptoms](#) of infection
  - Employee should call a doctor if they develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19
  - Employee should call a doctor if they have recently traveled from an area with [widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19](#)
- Employees should avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Employees should clean all “high touch” surfaces every day ([EPA recommended antimicrobial products](#))
- Employees should cover cough or sneeze with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash
- Employees should wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Employees who travel for non-business matters to a country identified by the CDC as a [Level 3 risk or higher for COVID-19](#) may be subject to work restrictions

- OCWD will not provide group tours of any of its facilities
- OCWD will suspend all staff travel
- OCWD will cancel and suspend planning for all District events, such as the Children’s Water Education Festival
- OCWD will suspend staff participation in speakers’ bureau engagements and community outreach events
- OCWD participation in off-site meetings shall be done via Zoom
- OCWD board meetings will be conducted in-person by the president, or his designee, and designated OCWD staff. All other board members shall participate remotely via Zoom
- OCWD board committee meetings will follow the same protocol as board meetings, except the president or his designee will not attend in-person
- The groundwater producers meetings will be held remotely via Zoom
- Members of the public will be encouraged to participate in public meetings via Zoom
- All OCWD internal meetings will be conducting in a manner that adheres to the appropriate CDC-recommended practice of social distancing. Social distancing should be practiced in all workplace areas including the employee lunchrooms, patio, etc.
- OCWD employees who fall within the categories stated by the Governor, and listed on the [Orange County Health Care Agency](#) and [CDC guidelines](#) should stay home and self-isolate. These are people aged 65 and older, and those with chronic health conditions (such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease). We will allow flexibility with leave accruals so employees can use whatever leave is available in any of their leave banks. Under the newly passed legislation, Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201), and under certain circumstances employees who have exhausted leave time may be afforded a certain amount of emergency sick leave. These employees shall work with human resources to coordinate this effort.
- OCWD employees who have childcare needs due to school closures can use any leave accruals available in any of their leave banks. As mentioned above, there may be options under certain circumstances for employees who have exhausted all leave time and those employees shall work directly with human resources to coordinate this effort.
- OCWD will incorporate additional best practices to mitigate workplace risks as needed including, but not limited to, extra cleaning of communal high-touch surfaces, closing the employee fitness center, suspending employee social gatherings, and not permitting employees to bring in food to share with other employees
- Telecommuting is encouraged and will be evaluated and approved based on business need, critical functions and continuity of operations. OCWD is an essential business, but it will make every effort to accommodate as many employees as possible to work remotely.
- OCWD has activated its Emergency Operations Center at Level 1.
- OCWD will temporarily close its doors to the public and all business will be conducted online or via phone. Deliveries will continue to be allowed on site.

OCWD's response plan will remain in effect through April 30, 2020 and will be re-evaluated at that time. As this is an emerging situation that is rapidly evolving, the plan is subject to change based on new information and guidance.

**Additional resources**

For additional information regarding COVID-19, please visit the [CDC](#) and [OC Health Care Agency](#) websites.