



COVID-19 Planning and Response: Overview of EPA's Pandemic Incident Action Checklist for Water Utilities

April 7, 2020



How to Participate

- Interactions

- Ask questions in the Questions/Chat box.
- See Handouts.

- Troubleshooting

- For help, contact wsdwebinarsupport@cadmusgroup.com or call 703 247-6115.

- Tips

- At the end of the webinar, please complete the course survey.
- A PDF of the slides, a webinar recording, and other relevant materials will be sent after the webinar.

Today's Webinar Presenters

Dawn Ison, Geologist

*U.S. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water,
Water Security Division*

Todd Brown, Public Works Director

Town of Marbleton, Wyoming





Incident Action Checklist – Pandemic Incidents

The actions in this checklist are divided up into three "tip & run" sections and are examples of activities the water sector (drinking water and wastewater systems) can take to prepare for, respond to and recover from a pandemic. You can also populate the "My Contacts" sections with critical information that your utility may need during a pandemic.

Coronavirus Pandemic and Water Utilities

For general information from EPA about COVID-19 and water, see www.epa.gov/coronavirus. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 via drinking water and wastewater is low. However, there are other impacts to drinking water and wastewater utilities, which may include, but are not limited to:

- Staff shortages due to absenteeism;
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- Field operations interruptions (repairs, meter reading, sampling); and
- Inability to maintain all operations.



Many water and wastewater utilities have created pandemic resilience plans based on best practices and experiences from past global outbreaks such as the avian flu in 2003 and swine flu in 2009. Utilities should review and update those plans and stay in close contact with their local health department and regulatory agency as the COVID-19 situation is dynamic and evolving rapidly. Water and wastewater systems need the most up-to-date information in order to make decisions that are right for their utility based on the pandemic impacts to their specific community.

Sign up for any COVID-19 alerts or notifications available from your regulatory agency and local emergency management agencies and health departments to stay up to date.

General COVID-19 Information

- [U.S. Coronavirus Website](#)
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- [Coronavirus Research Update](#) (WRF)

Information on Hygiene and Water Safety

- [OSHA Guidance for Wastewater Workers](#) COVID-19 (OSHA)
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- [Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response](#) (DHS)

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Incident Action Checklist - Pandemic Incidents

Dawn Ison, Water Security Division
Pandemic IAC Webinar
April 7, 2020

Incident Action Checklists Overview

Drought, Earthquake, Extreme Cold and Winter Storms, Extreme Heat, Flooding, Hurricane, Tornado, Tsunami, Volcanic Activity, Wildfire, Cyber, HABs, Power Outages

The image displays a collection of overlapping incident action checklist cards from the EPA. Each card is titled with a specific incident type and provides a concise overview of the event, followed by a list of recovery actions for water and wastewater utilities. The cards are arranged in a fan-like pattern, showing various disaster scenarios such as flooding, drought, extreme cold, extreme heat, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic activity, tsunamis, wildfires, harmful algal blooms, and power outages. Each card includes the EPA logo and a brief description of the incident. The recovery actions are listed in bullet points, often categorized by the following section: recovery from the incident, recovery from flooding, recovery from drought, recovery from extreme cold, recovery from extreme heat, recovery from hurricanes, recovery from earthquakes, recovery from volcanic activity, recovery from tsunamis, recovery from wildfires, recovery from harmful algal blooms, and recovery from power outages. Some cards also include a small image related to the incident, such as a flooded area or a power outage. The cards are numbered 1 through 18, indicating they are part of a larger set of checklists.

- Flooding Incident**: The actions in this checklist for water and wastewater utilities can also populate the "My Co"...
- Drought Incident**: Cold weather brings with it have multiple impacts on a not listed for...
- Extreme Cold and Utilities Incident**: The actions in this checklist for water and wastewater utilities can also populate the "My Co"...
- Wildfire Impact Incident**: A wildfire is any uncontained human-combustion fire that spreads in an uncontrolled manner...
- Hurricane Incident**: A hurricane is a very intense tropical storm...
- Extreme Heat Incident**: An extreme heat event or more severe days. The heat or Extreme heat can impact water and wastewater utilities...
- Earthquake Impact Incident**: An earthquake is caused by moving geologic plates...
- Volcanic Activity Incident**: More than 50 volcanoes are active in the United States...
- Tsunami Impact Incident**: A tsunami is a series of massive waves that are caused by the displacement of water...
- Tornado Impact Incident**: Tornadoes can occur in any part of the United States...
- Harmful Algal Incident**: Increasingly, utilities in the United States are facing drinking water contamination from harmful algal blooms (HABs) or cyanobacteria (cyanobacteria) blooms...
- Cyber Incidents Incident**: The loss of electric power can have profound impacts on drinking water and wastewater utilities...
- Power Outages and Water Utilities Incident**: The impacts of losing grid power at drinking water and wastewater utilities may include pressure losses and...

Introduction



Incident Action Checklist – Pandemic Incidents

The actions in this checklist are divided up into three "rip & run" sections and are examples of activities the water sector (drinking water and wastewater systems) can take to prepare for, respond to and recover from a pandemic. You can also populate the "My Contacts" sections with critical information that your utility may need during a pandemic.

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- Outlines potential impacts of pandemic incidents
- COVID-19 specific resources
- Drinking water and wastewater utilities must evaluate their vulnerabilities to pandemics and minimize impacts



Prepare, Respond, Recover

Actions to Prepare for a Pandemic



Planning

- Identify a lead, back-up, and team of individuals to serve as the Pandemic Response Team.
- Develop a process for maintaining situational awareness of the current and future spread of the virus, as well as community impacts.
- Develop strategies for managing the pandemic such as identifying response actions based on current information and the system's emergency response plan and continuity of operations plan.
- Update your [drinking water emergency response plan](#) (ERP) and [wastewater ERP](#) to ensure all contacts (24/7 availability), system diagrams and standard operating procedures for system operations are up to date.
- Develop or update a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that specifically addresses the needs of a pandemic and plans for significant shortages. Resources to help in the development of the plan include the [Pandemic Operations Template](#) and [Business Continuity Planning for Water Utilities: Guide](#). The COOP should include, at a minimum, the following:
 - Join your state's [Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network \(WARN\)](#) or other local mutual aid network. In addition, check to see if you are included in a statewide mutual aid law. WARNs may be able to provide assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials and technical assistance.
 - In addition, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), National Rural Water Association (NRWA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Indian Health Service (IHS), the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA) and the United South and Eastern Tribes (USESET), among others, may be able to provide licensed operators or technical assistance.
 - Assess your system's Information Technology (IT) capability to ensure it can accommodate remote work arrangements without compromising security.
 - Work with local law enforcement and health

Actions to Respond to a Pandemic



Initial Actions

- Activate your Pandemic Response Team
- Execute your pandemic COOP and Emergency Response Plan
 - Activate defined emergency roles and responsibilities
- Stay in close contact with your regulatory agency to coordinate on any issues that arise

- Implement telework for as many staff as is feasible to maintain operations.
- Assess all construction and maintenance activities and limit to only critical projects.

Maintaining Essential Operations


- Implement minimum staffing plans and set up shift rotations.
- Participate in emergency response exercises to experience critical issues.
- Keep your regulatory agency up to date on operations.

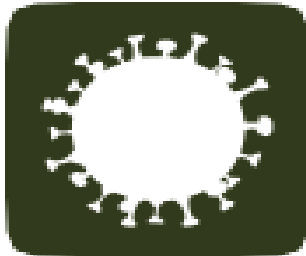
Actions to Recover from a Pandemic



- Assign a utility representative to continue providing updates to customers regarding current mitigation actions, as well as preparation for future incidents.
- Work with vendors and internal departments to return to normal service.
- Develop a lessons-learned document and an after-action report (AAR) to document your response activities, including what went well and what did not go well. Create an improvement plan (IP) based on your AAR and use the IP to update your vulnerability assessment, ERP and COOP.
- Revise budget and asset management plans to address increased costs from response-related activities and follow-up actions.
- Identify mitigation measures that can help increase utility resilience for future pandemics.
- Conduct annual utility-specific pandemic awareness training with all employees.

Notes and Resources

My Contacts and Resources 		
CONTACT NAME	UTILITY/ORGANIZATION NAME	PHONE NUMBER
	Primacy Agency	
	Local Health Department	
	Local EMA	
	WARN Chair	
	Local Laboratory	
	State EMA	



Resources

Mutual Aid Programs

- [Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network](#) (EPA)

Emergency Response and Continuity of Operations Planning

- [Drinking Water Emergency Response Plans](#) (EPA)
- [Wastewater Emergency Response Plan Template](#) (RCAP)
- [Pandemic Continuity of Operations Template](#) (GLCAP)
- [Business Continuity Planning for Water Utilities: Guidance Document](#) (WRF, AWWA, EPA)
- [Business Continuity Planning in the Event of an Influenza: A Reference Guide](#) (AMWA, WaterISAC)
- [Tabletop Exercise Tool, Pandemic Scenario](#) (EPA)

Other Tools and Resources

- [Water Laboratory Alliance](#) – Drinking Water and Wastewater (EPA)
- [Crisis Emergency Response and Recovery Access \(CERRA\) Framework](#) (DHS)
- [Water Utility Communication During Emergency Response](#) (EPA)
- [Water Utility Response On-The-Go](#) (EPA)
- [Resources for Small Public Water System Operators](#) (EPA)

Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

▲ Planning

- Update your [drinking water emergency response plan](#) (ERP) and [wastewater ERP](#) to ensure all contacts (24/7 availability), system diagrams and standard operating procedures for system operations are up to date.
- Develop or update a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that specifically addresses the challenges of a pandemic and plans for significant staff shortages.
- [Join your state's Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network \(WARN\)](#) or other local mutual aid network. In addition, check to see if you are included in a statewide mutual aid law. WARNs may be able to provide assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials and technical assistance.
 - In addition, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership ([RCAP](#)), National Rural Water Association ([NRWA](#)), Rural Utilities Service ([RUS](#)), Indian Health Service ([IHS](#)), the [Inter Tribal Council of Arizona \(ITCA\)](#) and the United South and Eastern Tribes ([USET](#)), among others, may be able to provide licensed operators or technical assistance.

- Actions to take on COOP or ERP
- Join WARN and reach out to your regulatory agency and technical assistance providers



Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

- Work with local law enforcement and health departments to ensure water sector staff are considered first responders, as specified in the [Department of Homeland Security's \(DHS\) Crisis Emergency Response and Recovery Access \(CERRA\) Framework](#), and will have the ability to conduct field work when necessary if quarantines are placed on a community.
 - DHS developed a [memorandum](#) that identifies drinking water and wastewater personnel as essential workers during the COVID-19 response
- Share your COOP, and any specific pandemic issues, with your local emergency management agency (EMA) and health departments, regulatory agency, and any consecutive systems.
- Assess your system's Information Technology (IT) capability to ensure it can accommodate remote work arrangements without compromising security.

- Ensure access
- Share your plans with local agencies and any consecutive systems
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and bring up issues
- Secure remote capabilities are a key response action whenever possible

Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

Protecting Employee Health

- Reinforce good personal hygiene practices with all staff.
 - Share [preventative measures](#) (proper hand washing, covering cough, not touching face, etc.) provided by the [CDC](#) to minimize risk.
- Ensure availability of adequate proper personal protective equipment (PPE), infection control, and cleaning supplies. The disinfection of electronics may require specific supplies.
- Set up a policy for screening employees for symptoms, setting up sick leave and telework, keeping critical staff on-site, and social distancing in the office (no meetings, keeping 6 feet apart).
- Establish pandemic-specific health and safety protocols for field sampling conducted by staff or others providing sampling assistance in the event of staff shortages.

- Minimize risk of exposure
- Set up policies
- Create health and safety protocols for field staff (sampling, emergency repairs, etc.)



Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

Maintaining Essential Operations —

- Identify critical positions (plant operator, sampler, in-house and contract laboratory personnel, etc.) and skills, along with back-ups for each of those positions.
- Identify critical functions (disinfection, pumping, sampling and analysis, aeration, purchasing chemicals and supplies, etc.) and the minimum staff required to keep those functions operating.
- Develop a list of critical customers who need a continuous source of potable drinking water (e.g., hospitals, nursing homes, dialysis clinics, manufacturers).
- Communicate with the laboratory that does your analytical work to ensure that they have a pandemic plan in place and are available to receive and analyze your samples. Also, make sure they have a back-up laboratory option in place.

- Critical positions
- Critical functions
- Critical customers
- Critical sample analysis



Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

Maintaining Essential Operations —

- Assess staffing alternatives:
 - Determine the process to use for your state's WARN to request personnel during a pandemic. Reach out to your state or tribe's assistance providers such as [RCAP](#), [NRWA](#), [RUS](#), [IHS](#), [ITCA](#), and [USET](#) to determine their ability to provide personnel if your staff cannot report to work due to illness, caring for an ill family member or being quarantined themselves.
 - Cross-train staff to handle multiple positions and critical operations.
 - Ensure redundancy in laboratory personnel and, when possible, have contracts with multiple commercial laboratories as a contingency measure in cases of laboratory staff shortages.
 - Assess your remote operations capabilities (i.e., SCADA).

- WARN
- TA Providers
- Cross-Training
- Laboratory redundancy

Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

▲ Maintaining Essential Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies

- Identify critical facilities (booster pump, chlorinator, aerator, etc.) and supplies (chlorine, other treatment chemicals, fuel, electricity, etc.) that must stay operational and available.
- Create an inventory of all critical materials, chemicals, supplies and equipment.
- Contact all vendors and manufacturers to ensure they have a pandemic plan in place and can deliver needed supplies.
 - Stock up on treatment chemicals and critical materials and equipment, as space, costs, and expiration dates allow.
- If possible, source materials and chemicals from two or more suppliers from different regions to mitigate supply chain disruptions.
 - Work with your vendors and require them to identify who their second-tier sources are to make sure the vendors you are using are not using the same source (which would equate to a sole source supply).

- Critical facilities
- Inventory supplies
- Contact all suppliers

Pandemic IAC - PREPARE

Communication

- Develop [communication templates](#) so you can communicate with your customers quickly.
- Identify appropriate distribution mechanisms such as via the website, social media, local news, reverse 911, etc.
- Identify emergency contacts with your local health department, regulatory agency, and EMA to communicate throughout the pandemic.

- Develop templates
- Identify communication mechanisms
- Identify emergency contacts



Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Initial Actions

- Execute your pandemic COOP and Emergency Response Plan
- Stay in close contact with your regulatory agency to coordinate on any issues that arise (lack of certified operators, laboratory capacity, or access to sample locations).**



- Execute the Plan
- Stay in close contact with your regulatory agency!

Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Protecting Employee Health

- Inform all staff on the latest CDC recommendations to limit the further transmission of the virus.
- Close all offices to the public.
- Temporarily suspend any in-home non-sampling appointments by staff such as water efficiency visits. Compliance sampling activities must continue.
- Limit or cease all in-person meetings, gathering of people in the same location, and travel.
- Ensure that workers and those with overlapping expertise are generally separated to minimize the risk of co-transmission.
- Implement telework for as many staff as is feasible to maintain operations.
- Assess all construction and maintenance activities and limit to only critical projects.

- CDC recommendations
- Limit any contact
- Telework
- Assess construction and maintenance



Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Maintaining Essential Operations

- Implement minimum staffing plans and set up shift rotations.
- If you begin or anticipate experiencing critical staffing shortages:
 - Keep your regulatory agency up to date.
 - Reach out to your [WARN](#). WARN members may be able to assist with personnel, equipment, supplies, and technical assistance.
 - Reach out to neighboring utilities and develop mutual aid agreements, if possible.
 - Reach out to your local assistance providers such as [RCAP](#), [NRWA](#), [RUS](#), [IHS](#), [ITCA](#), and [USET](#) about their ability to provide licensed operators or technical assistance.
 - If the above resources are not available, contact your local EMA. Make sure to be specific about the type of personnel you need and for the type of water system.

- Staffing Plans
- Potential Staffing Assistance
- Don't be afraid to bring up issues!



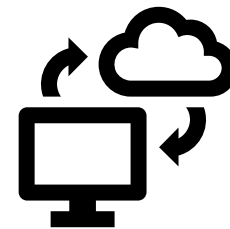
Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Maintaining Essential Operations —

- Communicate often with the laboratory that does your analytical work to ensure that they are available to receive and analyze your samples and make sure they have a back-up laboratory option in place.

- Remind all staff to anticipate cyber threats including social engineering, phishing, and other opportunistic cyber-attack tactics preying on fear and the need for information that could disrupt billing or supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) operations.
 - Remind staff not to click on any links that could execute a hostile program.
 - Back-up all critical files and ensure security systems (firewalls, anti-virus) are functioning on all remote equipment.

- Laboratory capacity
- Cyber threats



Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Maintaining Essential Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies

- Secure all facilities in preparation for limited access and surveillance.
- Stay in close contact with your suppliers of equipment, materials, treatment chemical, and other supplies, especially if you were not able to stockpile chemicals or materials. If you anticipate an impending shortfall of chemicals, contact your WARN to see if other utilities can assist, your assistance providers ([RCAP](#), [NRWA](#), [RUS](#), [IHS](#), [ITCA](#), [USET](#)) to see if they have resources, and your local emergency management agency who can request chemicals through state or tribal emergency authorities or make requests to the federal level.

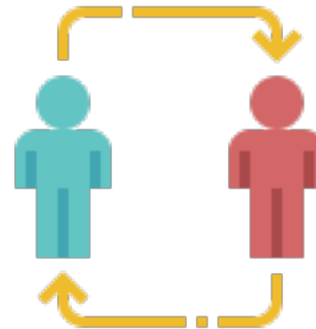
- Secure facilities
- Stay in contact with all suppliers

Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Communication

- Drinking Water - Communicate with your customers as soon as possible and often about the safety of their water supply using guidance provided by the EPA and CDC.
- Wastewater - Communicate with your customers (local news, social media, or webpage) about wet wipes and the consequences of flushing them down the toilet (e.g., sewage backups).
- Stay in close contact with your regulatory agency, local health department, and local EMA.

- DW - Safety
- WW - Flushing
- Keep talking to local and state/tribal agencies!



Pandemic IAC - RESPOND

Documentation

- Document all events, timeframes, and resulting impacts, so this information can be used as part of the post-incident investigation.
 - Be sure to document all hours (regular and overtime) and keep invoices for all equipment, supplies, contracts, vendors, etc.

- Document hours
- Document all purchases
- Document any mutual aid agreements or assistance



EPA

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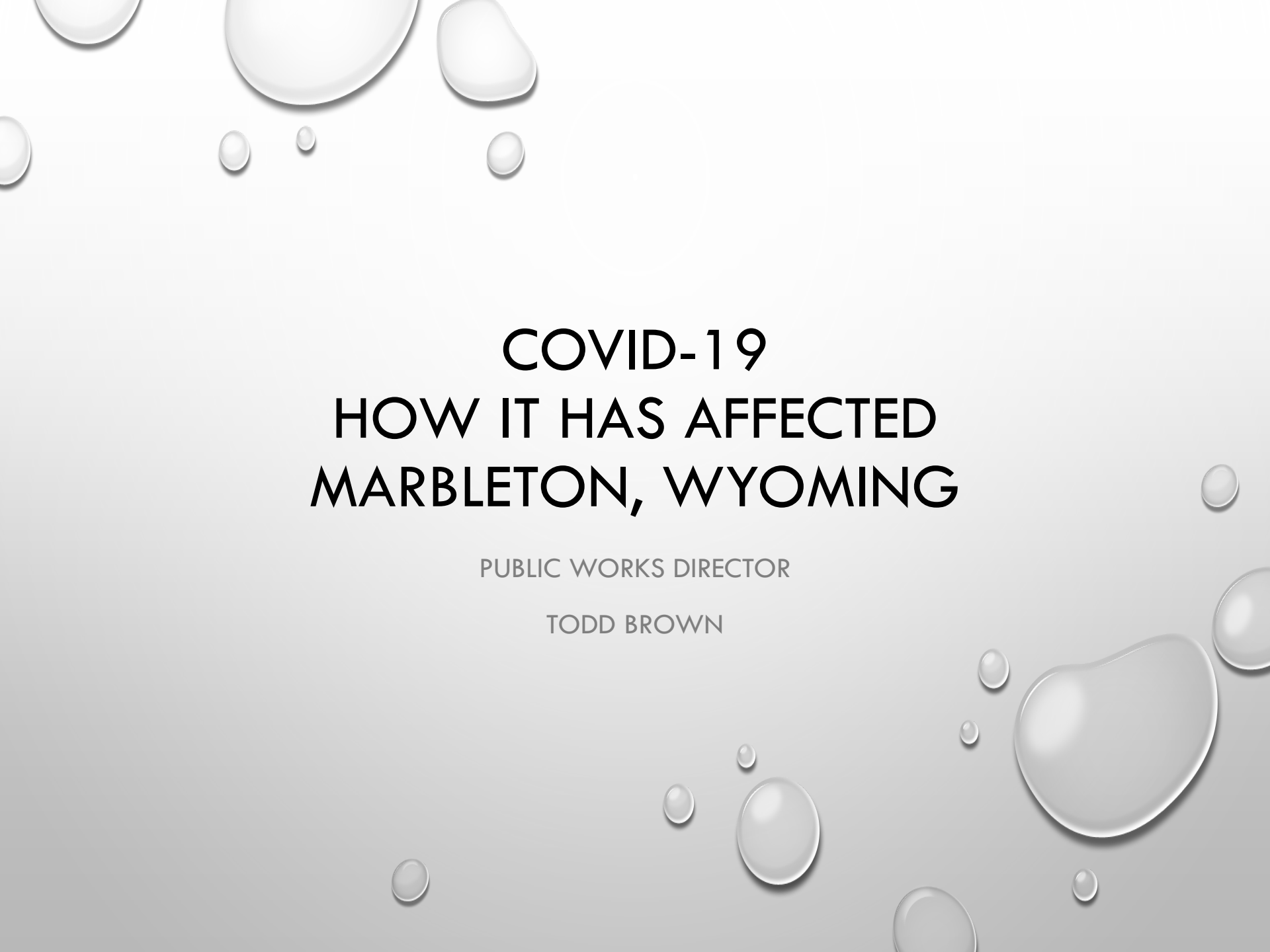
Download the checklist at: <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/water-utility-resources-covid-19-pandemic>

OR

<https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/incident-action-checklists-water-utilities>

Contact Information:
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The background of the slide is a light gray gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The text is centered on the slide.

COVID-19 HOW IT HAS AFFECTED MARBLETON, WYOMING

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

TODD BROWN

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOWN OF MARBLETON

We are located in Southwestern Wyoming at 6,869 FT Elevation

Population: 1,094

3 elevated water tanks with combined capacity of approx. 700,000 gallons of potable water

7 wells 300 Ft to 1,100 Ft deep

Approx. 380 water services

3 licensed water operators

Marbleton also maintains a 1.2 MGD wastewater plant

WE HAVE A TOWN STAFF OF 6 FULL TIME EMPLOYEES, WE ARE CONSIDERED TO BE A SMALL COMMUNITY.



COVID-19 CONCERNS FOR MARBLETON

All 3 licensed operators becoming sick at the same time

Can't get needed fuel and supplies

Maintaining a safe workable schedule for all employees

Being able to supply town with potable water and wastewater services

Maintaining a positive proactive atmosphere



COVID-19 RESPONSE

Fueled all vehicles and equipment

Made contact with nearest towns

Practice work place distancing (1 person per vehicle)

Arrange work schedules to keep workforce separated

Contracted out some work to keep utility operators away from each other and the public

Checked all back up generators by starting them and letting them run

Stocked up on cleaning supplies and chemicals

Spoke with all employees about staying home if they were not feeling well

Reminded all employees about hand washing, disinfecting, and sanitizing guidelines

Utilize online and phone meeting platforms for all public and employee meetings

As of April 6, 2020, the State of Wyoming has recorded 212 positive cases, of which 52 have recovered. The State has reported 0 COVID deaths at this time.

Here in Sublette County, we have 1 confirmed positive case of COVID-19 and she now is listed as recovering.

I encourage you to follow CDC recommendations and stay home whenever possible. Stay safe and think of others.



Questions?



Upcoming Water Security Division Webinars

May 2020 *AWIA Compliance Lessons Learned*

June 10, 2020 *AWIA Guidance for Small Systems*

July 29, 2020 *Building Security and Resilience with EPA in
the Water and Wastewater Sector*

August 19, 2020 *Resources for Public and Environmental
Health Labs*



Thank you!

Dawn Ison

USEPA, Water Security Division

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www.epa.gov/coronavirus

