

COVID-19 Water Quality Frequently Asked Questions for the Public

- [Where can I go for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and Water Quality?](#)

The South Dakota Department of Health is maintaining the state's primary source of information regarding COVID-19 at [COVID.sd.gov](https://www.southdakota.gov/covid-19). The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a new [COVID-19 page](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also have a [webpage](#) with information about water quality. This FAQ summarizes some of this information.

- [Is drinking tap water safe?](#)

Yes. The World Health Organization has stated that the “presence of the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies and based on current evidence the risk to water supplies is low.” EPA’s drinking water regulations require treatment at public water systems to remove or kill pathogens including viruses. DENR’s Drinking Water Program is working with water treatment systems so that they continue to follow these regulations.

- [Does the coronavirus pose a risk to South Dakota’s surface waters and recreation?](#)

No. The CDC has stated, “There is no evidence showing anyone has gotten COVID-19 through drinking water, recreational water, or wastewater. The risk of COVID-19 transmission through water is expected to be low.”

- [Are public utilities expected to uphold the routine operation and maintenance of system facilities during an emergency?](#)

Yes. The Department of Homeland Security has declared drinking water systems, wastewater systems, and other utility operations as “essential critical infrastructure workers” during the COVID-19 response. This means that water and wastewater systems have a special responsibility to continue normal operations as modified to account for CDC workforce and customer protection guidance. For more information on the definition of essential critical infrastructure workers, visit [the Department of Homeland Security webpage](#).

- **Can COVID-19 be transmitted through wastewater?**

No. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), “coronaviruses are susceptible to the same disinfection conditions in community and healthcare settings as other viruses, so current disinfection conditions in wastewater treatment facilities are expected to be sufficient. This includes conditions for practices such as oxidation with hypochlorite (i.e., chlorine bleach) and peracetic acid, as well as inactivation using UV irradiation.”

- **If I am a wastewater worker should I be doing anything differently to keep myself safe?**

[According to the CDC](#) and [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#), there is no evidence that wastewater workers need to take additional precautions. Workers should always follow [routine practices to prevent exposure to wastewater](#), including using the engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and the personal protective equipment normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater.