

## COVID-19 AND WATER SERVICES

SYNTHESIS OF MEASURES ADOPTED BY  
AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA MEMBERS

*In response to the unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis affecting the planet, the members of Aqua Publica Europea have worked together to share experiences and practices to ensure the continuity of essential water and sanitation services for all by taking necessary safety and security precautions.*

*As cooperation, solidarity and unity have proven important tools to face the emergency, Aqua Publica Europea publishes a summary of the measures adopted, for the use of other water operators. This synthesis is based on members' contingency plans and outcomes of a series of video-conferences held in March and April 2020 with the participation of many public water operators, members of the association.*

*This list of measures is to be considered non-exhaustive, with a degree of variability across operators and across areas depending, amongst other things, on the evolution (severity) of the outbreak or governmental orders. For these reasons, the document is to be considered as a reference only of common approaches.*



## FIRST RESPONSE MEASURES

**IMMEDIATE establishment of crisis unit** composed of representatives of the Direction General, human resources, unions and doctor to answer questions, coordinate decisions and instructions, monitor health of the personnel and liaise with authorities.

**RAPID adoption of contingency plan** to outline measures for continuity of services whilst protecting health and strictly following distancing measures: including understanding of risks, identification of critical functions, emergency actions and key contacts.

**Across-the-board implementation of safety and hygiene measures** Security distances to be respected, provision of hygiene supplies (water, soap, sanitiser), regular sanitisation of facilities (HQ and plants) and after each shift, sanitisation of company cars, shut down of public drinking fountains if risk of hand/face contact.

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT

**Safety of workers** Instructions to remain at home in case of symptoms, preventive measures for staff with health preconditions, approval of holiday requests and measures in line with national measures (unemployment/ partial unemployment), comprehensive information and continuous contacts with staff through adequate media.

- **At the HQ:** working from home to the maximum extent possible, organisation of arrival/departure shifts, permanencies.
- **At work sites:** maintain essential operations and slow down/discontinue other operations. Interventions in private buildings or homes limited to urgent actions, 'segregation' (team A and team B never meet) and back-up teams. Distancing applied also in relations with external companies (suppliers, transport companies, etc.)

Workers to be provided with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) according to needs and duties, and with sufficient information and guidelines.

**Customer relations** Postponing billing processes in accordance with national emergency regulations; suspension of water cuts due to unpaid bills. Communication efforts to reassure about quality of water and counter disinformation. Online, phone or by-appointment customer services preferred and customer desks closed – when in-person interaction, ensure safety with: windows, masks and distancing.

**Commercial relations** Cancellation of meetings, trainings, etc. Suspension of commercial relations except for essential supplies. Suppliers to prove they adopted measures that are consistent with operators' contingency plan during operations.

## OPERATIONS

**Essential supplies** Supply of masks and other protection equipment for employees a major concern – responsible use of available PPE, information of workers, liaising with authorities to ensure that water is priority sector, to extent possible solidarity between operators. Liaison with critical supply and chemical producers to ensure capacity to deliver - importance of guaranteeing transport routes.

**Water quality** Permanent liaison with health authorities and compliance with requirements to maintain high quality of water