

COVID-19 and Your Onsite Sewage System

Is there a risk associated with onsite sewage systems?

The [CDC](#) currently expects the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through sewage systems to be low. There is no evidence to date that this type of transmission has occurred. While similar viruses have been detected in untreated sewage for several days, the ability of COVID-19 to survive in sewage is currently unknown. However, the [EPA](#) expects that a properly managed onsite system will treat COVID-19 in the same manner it safely manages other viruses in wastewater.

Are there extra precautions you should take?

[OSHA](#) does not have any additional recommended safety precautions for wastewater workers. Typical precautions (below) should be sufficient. Wastewater workers should follow routine practices to prevent exposure to wastewater. This should include the use of engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment. Also remember, standard disinfection practices work to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Typical precautions when working with wastewater

Wash hands with soap and water immediately after handling wastewater.

- Avoid touching face, mouth, eyes, nose, or open sores and cuts while handling wastewater.
- After handling wastewater, wash your hands with soap and water *before* eating or drinking.
- After handling wastewater, wash your hands with soap and water *before* and *after* using the toilet.
- Before eating, remove soiled work clothes and eat in designated areas away from wastewater-handling activities.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces several times during your work shift.
- Do **not** smoke or chew tobacco or gum while handling wastewater.
- Keep open sores, cuts, and wounds covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Gently flush eyes with safe water if human waste or sewage contacts eyes.
- Use waterproof gloves to prevent cuts and contact with wastewater.
- Wear rubber boots at the worksite and during transport of wastewater.
- Remove rubber boots and work clothes before leaving worksite.
- Clean contaminated work clothing daily with 0.05% chlorine solution (1 part household bleach to 100 parts water).

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call

711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.

Also check in with the [Washington On-Site Sewage Association](#) for more tips.

Additional COVID-19 Resources

- [DOH Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) – updated information and resources daily
- [Local Health Jurisdictions](#)
- [Workplace and Employers](#)
- [Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness](#)
- [Communities and Community Organizations](#)
- [Stigma Reduction](#)
- [How Can I Be Prepared for a COVID-19 Outbreak?](#)