

# COVID-19

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER

The presence of SARS-COV-2 has been reported in municipal wastewater samples before treatment, in countries such as China, France, Australia, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage health care facilities to discharge their wastewater to a sewer system, which is connected to a treatment plant, or failing that, to less conventional technology (e.g. septic tank, oxidation pond).
- Ensure that all wastewater treatment plants are adequately and efficiently managed, capable of eliminating bacterial and virological contamination.

### THE ACTIVITIES OF WATER AND SANITATION OPERATORS

- Require water and sanitation operators to supervise strictly the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):
  - Waterproof gloves when cleaning pumps or screens and when handling sewage, sludge or sand;
  - Wellington boots;
  - Face and eye protection: goggles and mask or a face shield;
  - An approved N-95 respirator for those performing cleaning processes that generate aerosols;
  - Waterproof overall for those having direct exposure to sewage such as in wet wells, or sewers.
- Strengthen the control and surveillance of private municipal and industrial wastewater collection companies, to ensure that their effluents are safely discharged to conventional treatment systems.
- Strengthen surveillance of the final destination of chemical and pharmaceutical liquid waste generated by the health sector (e.g. laboratories, pharmacies), and ensure that the waste is disposed of according to the guidelines of the World Health Organization<sup>1</sup>. Most importantly, prevent discharges entering the subsoil, streams or surface water sources without being treated.
- Promote the dissemination of knowledge on the behaviour of SARS-CoV-2 in municipal wastewater.
- Request water and sanitation operators to include the identification of SARS-COV-2 in the effluent when monitoring water quality.
- Implement Sanitation Safety Plans in health care facilities to ensure that wastewater is not a threat to public health.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42238>  
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/259491>

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## TREATMENT AND DISINFECTION

- Carry out the treatment of municipal wastewater according to national regulations and operating standards, ensuring timely bacteriological and virological removal during the process.
- Dispose of the effluent from less conventional wastewater systems in absorption wells, infiltration fields or similar facilities, that comply with appropriate design, construction and maintenance standards.
- Ensure that wastewater does not contaminate groundwater sources near water intakes intended for human consumption.

## WASTEWATER REUSE

- Follow the WHO-FAO standards for the reuse of wastewater in agriculture<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/wastewater/wwuvol2intro.pdf](https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/wastewater/wwuvol2intro.pdf)