



Date: March 27, 2020

To: Septage Service Providers and Haulers of Vermont

From: Eamon Twohig, Residuals Management Program, 802-490-6189  
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Re: COVID-19 and Septage Service Providers

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We wanted to reach out to septage haulers operating in Vermont to share some information regarding COVID-19. First and foremost, we recognize that septage haulers perform a critical function for protecting public health and thank you for your continued service under these stressful times. We wanted to pass along a few key messages:

- 1) ***Septage hauling/services are deemed critical to public health and safety and shall remain in operation.*** As I hope you all have heard or read, the Governor issued a 'stay at home' executive order to limit non-essential business and personal activities. The order specifically lists that services critical to public health include: "...maintenance of ... wastewater/draining infrastructure" and "... services for the safety, sanitation and operations of residences and other businesses".
  
- 2) ***Septage service workers should be taking extra precautions to protect themselves and their fellow workers from potential exposure to COVID-19, which may be present in septage and wastewater.*** Educate yourself and your staff about the virus, basic hygiene practices, proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing (both on and off the job – *to reduce community spread, do not go to work if you are sick*). Recommended PPE include water-repellent gloves, goggles, rubber boots, and hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or greater). This basic PPE should be provided to all staff who are in the field and/or potentially coming into contact with septage. I have provided direct links to guidance on worker exposure and PPE issued by Water Environment Federation (WEF), the CDC and OSHA. Please review the guidance and feel free to contact us if you have additional questions.
  - <https://www.wef.org/news-hub/wef-news/the-water-professionals-guide-to-the-2019-novel-coronavirus/>
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/sanitation/workers\\_handlingwaste.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/global/sanitation/workers_handlingwaste.html)
  - <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html>
  
- 3) ***Proactively communicate with the treatment plants that you frequently utilize for disposal.*** Vermont's municipal wastewater treatment plants remain in operation. However, in response to COVID-19 outbreak and to maintain staffing, these facilities may be limiting hours and rotating staff on shifts or scaling back on the number of staff working in the facility at the same time. As staffing is reduced, *some facilities may, in turn, have reduced capacity to receive septage*. We are encouraging haulers to speak directly with the facility operators and, if requested, adjust their workload so that emergency pump outs and crucial jobs are prioritized over routine septic maintenance/pump outs. For additional assistance or questions, please contact Vermont DEC's Residuals Management Program.