As we all deal with the disruptions and changes to our daily lives that the COVID-19 virus has created, public works and highway departments are working to figure out how to adjust activities as first responders, while keeping employees and citizens safe. Governor Lamont, through an executive order, directed non-essential businesses and non-profits to telecommute to the maximum extent possible. Critical infrastructure work is listed as essential, but what does that mean for your agency? This issue of Safety Matters hopes to provide some guidance on what is essential and how to keep those employees who cannot work from home as safe as possible.

*control measures may include handwashing, teleworking, limiting large gatherings, minimizing travel, etc.*
**Essential Work:** The Governor’s executive order and the guidance issued by the CT Department of Economic and Community Development list wastewater operations; transportation infrastructure; trash and recycling collection/hauling/processing; planning, engineering, design, bridge inspection, other construction support activities; and other functions of many public works departments as essential. For the entire list and guidance, follow the link in the Resources section.

What does that mean for you? What can you do, or not do, with potentially limited staff and supplies? Work such as plowing, filling potholes, cutting down unsafe trees, and keeping water and sewer services operational are clearly critical and, in some cases, explicitly listed. However, there are many activities that could be postponed if needed. If you can delay some non-critical work until summer you may need to do so, but not at the expense of being prepared and ready for an emergency regarding your infrastructure. Here is a list of items that should NOT be delayed:

### Essential Services
- Water and sewer operations
- Snow plowing and weather emergencies
- Repairs of failed systems including culverts, traffic lights and signs
- Building cleaning and maintenance

### Probably Essential
- Filling potholes
- Maintaining equipment
- Replacing signs and other worn out safety systems
- Cutting trees and brush related to safety

If you are not sure if your work is essential, ask yourself the following questions:

- **If the work isn’t done, will critical infrastructure (utilities, roads and streets) be placed in jeopardy?**
- **What is needed to make sure health and safety workers can get out and do their jobs?**
- **Is this work needed to be ready for an emergency weather event?**

If you answered yes to any of those questions, you may want to go ahead and keep doing those activities.
Staying Safe on the Job: If you are continuing to report in to work, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends maintaining at least six (6) feet of separation between yourself and others (colleagues, the public, etc.) to help reduce the possibility of infected individuals spreading the virus. Proper hand-washing when possible, or the use of hand sanitizer, is another way to reduce the possibility of contamination. Many public works departments have already transitioned to split shifts for crews, with those not physically at work still on call if needed. Others have implemented strict limits on numbers of crew at a site, cleaning and sterilizing regimens for vehicles and equipment, and changes to breaks and lunches. Outside vendors and visits from the public have been restricted in many places to by appointment only.

Other common sense changes include driving separately to any job site, limiting who is working in the building together, and being sure to clean and disinfect any surfaces and equipment. You may want to assign only one person to a particular vehicle during this time and use a single loader operator for filling trucks during snow events. If not, be sure to have the vehicle cleaned between uses and try to let the equipment sit overnight after cleaning. Of course, the overall key is limiting exposure. Here are some additional items to think about as you modify your operations:

- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 to 10 feet among all employees.
- Stay home if you are sick, even if it’s not COVID-19.
- Have office personnel work from home.
- Clean your hands often, and avoid touching surfaces with bare hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wear a face mask if you are sick and you have to work.
- Clean and disinfect more often than you think you need to.
- Prohibit public access to buildings and property without an appointment AND essential need.

Ask yourself what you would do if one of your employees were to come down with COVID-19 since that employee (and those working with that employee) would need to be quarantined for two weeks or more. Set up your operations to account for the possibility of staffing disruptions.
Partnering with Your Neighbors: As things progress, you or your neighboring communities may be in dire straits with employees out sick. Activate your emergency plans, and decide who can help cover if your crews are not available. Make sure you have any agreements for shared services in place. Don’t worry about trying to have a face-to-face meeting. Meet via phone and keep good notes. This is allowed in the emergency declarations. If you feel something has to be notarized, do it via video conference. We will get through this together.

Statewide Partners: At the T2 Center, we have many partnerships with other organizations we are utilizing in order to provide you with helpful information, these include: DEMHS/DESPP, ConnOSHA, CIRMA, CCM, CT Council of Small Towns (COST), your regional Council of Governments (COG) and the New England chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA). We will share this information on the listserv, and we encourage you to share your questions and suggestions on the listserv so your peers can share what they are doing and can feel connected.

Resources on COVID-19

Connecticut State Executive Orders and Associated Information

- Governor’s Executive Orders webpage: https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/Governors-Actions/Executive-Orders?Page=2#pos=2971
- Department of Economic and Community Development Essential Businesses Guidance webpage: https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Business-Exemptions-for-Coronavirus

National Resources

- OSHA’s Interim guidance for specific worker groups and their employees: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html
APWA is closely following the spread of COVID-19 and its effects on both the public and our public works family. Because many of you are on the front lines and in many cases are first responders, it is important for you to have the resources and information you need to perform your responsibilities safely and to respond to your own community’s needs.

With that in mind, APWA has developed a "Coronavirus and the Public Works Community" resource webpage.

- 15 Days to Slow the Spread: The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf)


### Connecticut State Agencies
- Connecticut Department of Health: [https://portal.ct.gov/dph](https://portal.ct.gov/dph)
- Connecticut Department of Labor: [http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/)
- Connecticut Department of Transportation: [https://portal.ct.gov/DOT](https://portal.ct.gov/DOT)

### Other Web Resources
- CT Council of Small Towns: [https://www.ctcost.org/](https://www.ctcost.org/)

For more Tech Briefs, Tailgate Talks, Safety Briefs or more information about the Connecticut Training and Technical Assistance Center, visit us at: [www.t2center.uconn.edu](http://www.t2center.uconn.edu)