



ORANGE COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT Memorandum

DATE: March 3, 2020
TO: All OCSD Staff
FROM: James D. Herberg, General Manager
SUBJECT: Coronavirus Disease 2019 - Information and Precautions

We know many of you are following news stories about the global spread of the coronavirus. I want to assure you that we are monitoring the situation and are taking all necessary steps to protect the health and well-being of our employees.

We have initiated the preparation stage to ensure readiness. We understand this may be a source of concern for employees.

About Coronavirus

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA), coronavirus is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The Coronavirus is spread, similarly to other illnesses like the flu and common cold, through coughing or sneezing by those who already have it. Symptoms can include fever, coughing and difficulty breathing.

The first known case of COVID-19 — short for “2019 novel coronavirus” — were reported in December in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). A novel (new) coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Coronavirus in Orange County

Although the OCHCA declared a Local Health Emergency on February 26, 2020, Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do stated that the declaration of local emergency is about preparedness, and it does not indicate a greater risk of harm. Internationally the illness has primarily affected adults – elderly patients with pre-existing conditions. At this time, Orange County has one (1) confirmed case of novel coronavirus - a man in his 50s - who received treatment and has recovered. The [CDC has stated](#) that “at this time most people in the United States have little immediate risk of exposure to the virus that causes coronavirus.”

Staying Healthy

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the OCHCA recommends taking these daily precautions for this or any other illness:

- 1. Travelers who are sick should stay home and call their health care provider.**

If you have recently been to an [affected area](#) and have developed a fever with cough or shortness of breath within 14 days of your travel or have had contact with someone who is suspected to have novel coronavirus, **stay home** and call your health care provider immediately. Do not go directly to the hospital. Please call the emergency room to get instructions before going in.

2. Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work and try to avoid errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading illness to others.

3. Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

4. Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

5. Wash your hands.

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

6. Practice other good health habits.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

For more information, visit the Orange County Health Care Agency's website at:
ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel_coronavirus

and the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions at:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

OCSD Guidelines

1. If you are sick, notify your supervisor and **stay home**. If you have symptoms of acute respiratory illness, do not come to work until you are free of fever, signs of fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medicines.
2. If you begin to feel sick while at OCSD, notify your supervisor, and go home as soon as possible.
3. Frequently wash your hands with soap and water and cover your mouth with a tissue (not your hand) when you sneeze or cough. **Hand sanitizer and tissues are available for all staff at the warehouse.**
4. Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces including doorknobs, keyboards, and phones to help remove germs. **Disinfecting wipes and other cleaning supplies are available for all staff at the warehouse.**
5. Currently, public health officials say there is no need to wear facemasks in the United States, unless you are showing symptoms and have been exposed to the coronavirus.

Coronavirus in wastewater

According to the [Water Environment Federation](#) and [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#), there is no evidence to suggest that additional, coronavirus specific protections are needed for employees involved in wastewater management operations, including those at wastewater treatment facilities. Wastewater treatment plant operations should ensure workers follow routine practices to prevent exposure to wastewater, including using the engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater.

Next Steps

OCSO has a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), which includes a Pandemic Planning section, should that become necessary. The plan includes a description of what a pandemic is, short- and long-term strategies, and stakeholder responsibilities to ensure maximum employee public health and safety and minimal business disruption. The plan identifies a set of action items that must be performed before, during and after a pandemic event – this list is constantly maintained.

For the foreseeable future, a preparedness team will be assembled to oversee and direct response actions until such time it is no longer necessary.

Over the next few weeks, the team will verify department readiness to implement plans, and ensure we have the supplies and equipment to continue to operate in the unlikely event of an extended business disruption.

Our Risk Management division will continue to closely monitor this situation and work with the appropriate agencies and take all appropriate steps necessary.

We will provide updates as needed. Please know that the safety of staff is my top priority. If we all follow these important guidelines, we can help keep ourselves, our coworkers and our families healthy.

Thank you,

Jim