

# **COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions**

**April 20, 2020**

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19, also known as the “novel coronavirus,” a pandemic. The increased number of cases across the globe is a concern for Waste Management. We are staying informed and consulting with health and safety experts to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps for the workplace. We have developed the below FAQs to help bring clarity to the situation. All employees are also encouraged to consult the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Public Health Agency of Canada or the National Centre for Disease Control in India, as well as relevant provincial, federal, state and local agencies for further information.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>  
<https://www.ncdc.gov.in/>

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## **Summary of Updates**

- #18 – Face covering guidelines

This document will be updated as we continue responding to the latest COVID-19 developments and will live on [wm.com/employeeupdates](http://wm.com/employeeupdates) moving forward. You can also sign up to receive text alerts by updating your personal contact information on [mywmtotalrewards.com](http://mywmtotalrewards.com) or call our employee hotline with any questions at 800-964-3373 and choose option 6.

## **Health and Safety**

### **1. Does WM have advice to prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

We're following the direction of experts, and the guidance they've provided includes:

- Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes with unwashed hands. Frequently clean hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - Before putting on personal protective equipment (PPE);
  - After removing PPE;
  - When changing gloves;
  - After coming into contact with waste;
  - After contact with any respiratory secretions (if you sneeze or cough, for example);
  - Before eating; and
  - After using the restroom.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based (at least 60%) hand sanitizer;
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, and if a tissue is not available, use a flexed elbow sleeve then immediately wash your hands;
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and/or cough;
- Avoid close contact with surfaces touched by anyone who has a fever or cough;
- If you have a fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing, seek medical care and share your recent travel history with a healthcare provider. Call your provider first unless you are having a true emergency and follow instructions before going to the office or hospital. They may have an alternative to expedite treatment, so you don't have to wait in a crowded area.

### **2. How long does COVID-19 live on surfaces or in the air?**

Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread through respiratory droplets while COVID-19's ability to survive on surfaces continues to be tested. The latest research shows the virus survives for up to three hours in the air and two to three days on surfaces. Although interesting, we must acknowledge that this research is conducted under ideal laboratory conditions which is very different compared to a social environment. Viruses in general are very fragile and do not survive well once they leave the host (person). It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes. The best preventative steps you can take are frequently disinfecting surfaces and washing your hands, as outlined above.

**3. Do I have to come to work if I might be exposed to the virus?**

If WM has knowledge that an employee has the virus or that an employee had close contact with someone who has the virus, then WM would require that employee to work from home. WM will also take the appropriate steps to maintain a clean workplace. WM will excuse COVID-19-related absences that impact employees, spouses or dependents, so if you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with symptoms or a confirmed diagnosis, please don't come to work and call your healthcare provider immediately.

**4. My co-worker is sick, shouldn't they be sent home?**

No employee should come into work if they have reason to believe they are sick and/or contagious. However, we are also aware that not every illness is caused by COVID-19. If you perceive that a coworker is sick, please contact your supervisor and they will be responsible for determining the appropriate steps.

**5. How is WM implementing policies to learn more about "objective factors?"**

WM requires that all employees disclose whether they have been within approximately six feet (two meters) of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period or had direct contact with infectious secretions from a person with COVID-19. WM also requires that all employees disclose whether they have been diagnosed with, have known exposure to or have been directed to self-quarantine by a healthcare provider or government entity because of COVID-19. These guidelines will be distributed to all WM sites.

**6. What do I do if an employee reports that they have COVID-19?**

Once an employee alerts you that they have been infected with COVID-19, you should immediately report that to your supervisor and People Business Partner. The employee and those who had close contact with that employee will need to be sent home. WM will also take measures to ensure the safety of the facility, which may include having the facility thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

**7. If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, in addition to cleaning and sanitizing their work area and the entire facility, do their co-workers need to go out on 14-day quarantine? Would that only include workers who were in proximity? How is that determined?**

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, site leadership will do an assessment of employees who were in close contact with the possibly-infected individual. Those employees will be required to work from home for 14 days, if possible, self-monitor for signs and symptoms of the virus and stay in contact with their People Business Partner. The workspaces where the possibly-infected individual frequents will be disinfected and all employees at that facility will be sent home for the day. Those who were in close contact should stay home and self-monitor for 14 days, while those who did not come into close contact will return once the facility has been cleaned.

**8. Can the Company send me home? Will I be paid if that happens?**

Yes, as with your co-workers, WM can send you home if there is a reasonable basis to believe you are ill. If WM sends you home, and you are unable to work remotely, the Company has guidelines to determine if you are eligible for some continuing pay, use of available paid time off benefits or disability pay. These guidelines have been developed to support managers and People Business Partners through this process. Your People Business Partner will explain what benefits are available to you. This may include contacting TOPS to ensure you are on the appropriate leave status until your physician has deemed you fit to return to work.

**9. If I am sent home, when can I return to work?**

Prior to returning to work, you may be required to provide a fitness for duty certification with your physician's consent and approval. WM employees who are sent home should maintain routine contact with their People Business Partner to provide updates regarding their health status. If a medical release is required to return to work, your manager or People Business Partner will advise you of this requirement.

**10. My spouse/partner has tested positive for COVID-19, what should I do?**

If your spouse/partner has tested positive for COVID-19, before reporting to work you should immediately notify your supervisor and People Business Partner of the situation. Your supervisor or People Business Partner will provide direction on next steps, which may include having you work from home, if appropriate.

**11. What are we doing about personal travel?**

WM cannot prevent employees from traveling for personal reasons. However, we strongly advise against all non-essential travel, per the direction of federal, state and local government agencies.

**12. Are we taking special precautions around cleaning our facilities?**

In general, COVID-19 is most commonly transmitted through respiratory droplets and surfaces. Clothing is not thought of as a common contact surface for the disease. Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings. Therefore, we are increasing the frequency of regular cleaning and adding disinfection for frequently touched surfaces within our traditional office spaces (i.e. doorknobs, faucets, counters, gym equipment, copiers, printers, coffee machines, vending machines, etc.) The desired approach is to perform this during business hours to provide comfort and to reduce and prevent spread.

**13. I rely on mass transit to get to work, and that has been impacted (or shut down) because of COVID-19. What should I do?**

If mass transit has been impacted (thereby impacting your ability to come to work), you should immediately notify your supervisor and People Business Partner and they will give you direction on next steps and whether working from home (or another reasonable accommodation) is possible. Each of those determinations will be made between the supervisor, People Business Partner and the employee upon notification.

**Operations**

**14. Is it safe to handle municipal solid waste (MSW) or recycling?**

Yes. Currently, the CDC, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the WHO are not calling for any additional steps to handle MSW or recycling. Waste handling is not a disease pathway and has not been identified as needing any special precaution by the aforementioned agencies. WM's standard practices and procedures for handling of solid waste and recycling – using caution and PPE – should protect employees from disease transmission.

**15. What are we doing to protect our employees who come into contact daily with waste?**

All employees handling waste or recycling should follow the PPE and safety procedures for their role. Customary work practices and precautions should protect WM employees from disease transmission. As an added precaution, our leadership teams are monitoring the number of employees in confined spaces at the same time and opting to have huddles and driver launches outdoors to accommodate social distancing guidelines, whenever possible. In terms of waste from homes or businesses that are not healthcare facilities, COVID-19 waste is not considered regulated medical waste. In terms of medical waste from hospitals, and other healthcare facilities, regulatory agencies have advised that waste grossly contaminated with blood or body fluids or waste from isolation contaminated by COVID-19 may meet the definition of infectious. This should be managed like any other regulated medical waste, according to local, state and hospital policies. We are continually evaluating this recommendation and advisories issued by federal, state and local governments. We will provide updates as new information becomes available.

**16. How are we implementing safeguards to protect WM employees at landfills and transfer stations?**

WM continues disposal operations, albeit with specific changes to assure social distancing, increased hygiene, disinfection and safeguards against COVID-19, including:

- Scale houses with windows that slide open are getting changed to fixed plexiglass with slots (old bank teller style);
- Sites that accept cash and checks are moving to credit cards and adding disinfection techniques;
- Customers are being encouraged to provide their own PPE, which should not be returned to the scale house;
- Credit card customer and manifest processes are being modified to reduce paper or signature pad transfers as much as possible;
- Disinfection and frequent hand washing have been added to normal processes;
- Time clock procedures, breaks, safety meetings, and personnel transportation around all sites have been modified to accommodate social distancing; and
- Operations support and back office functions have been moved to remote work as necessary and/or appropriate.

**17. My site or role does not allow for social distancing. What do you recommend I do?**

We recognize that with such a dynamic, dispersed workforce, we have situations where it is difficult to keep a six-foot buffer between team members. We're actively working on enhanced measures to allow for alternative work environments, and we're taking preventative steps to clean and sanitize customer experience centers, corporate offices and other WM sites.

**18. Why is WM not requiring workers to wear masks for protection from the novel coronavirus?**

On Friday, April 1, 2020, the CDC announced a new recommendation suggesting that people wear a cloth face covering in public settings where social distancing measure are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies). Because this is only a recommendation, mask use is not a requirement at all locations at this time. We do, however, recognize the CDC's guidance, and WM employees can voluntarily wear masks when they can do so safely.

Consistent with these new CDC recommendations, WM has provided information around proper mask usage should an employee choose to use one. It is critical to understand that masks and cloth coverings are not a substitute for social distancing, proper hand hygiene and other protocols that WM has enacted. It's also important to remember that a cloth face covering is meant to protect other people in the event an asymptomatic person is infected. We continue to stress that if you are sick, please do not come to work. Please note that some local governments have issued additional guidance regarding face coverings and WM will comply with any such rules.

**19. Will WM provide masks for protection against the novel coronavirus?**

WM is not providing masks to employees for protection against the coronavirus. The best advice regarding transmission of COVID-19 continues to be to frequently wash your hands with soap and water throughout the day and avoid touching workplace surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. You should always follow WM policies and procedures when using your PPE. It must also be understood that because this is a global pandemic, the CDC and other governmental agencies are requesting that we reserve all masks for healthcare providers.

**20. Is WM still moving forward with only essential business travel?**

No. As of March 12, the Company is postponing ALL business travel (with few exceptions) until further notice. If you have questions about a business trip, please consult your supervisor for review by your respective Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member.

**21. What are we doing about vendors and contractors and their potential exposure?**

WM is requiring all vendors and contractors to conduct meetings, visits and other business activities remotely, when appropriate. There may be other exceptions, but please consult with your supervisor and respective SLT member with any questions.

**22. I'm hearing that other companies are cancelling all group meetings and not requiring anyone to work in large employee settings... is that the case with WM?**

Consistent with our company-wide travel ban, we're restricting all business travel unless approved by your respective SLT member. Recommended "social distancing" suggests a six-foot buffer between individuals to avoid potential exposure to COVID-19. As an additional precaution, the Florida and Arizona Driver, Technician and Route Manager training centers will be closing indefinitely. As a final step, we're requesting that huddles with drivers, technicians and others incorporate the social distancing parameters outlined above. If your existing meeting location offers the ability to create space, please continue in place. If not, please begin conducting the huddles in the maintenance shop or outside where practical.

**23. I am getting ready for a local WM hiring event... are those still going on as planned? Is there a WM policy around these or is it Area specific depending on the spread of the virus?**

All WM Career Day activities have been postponed until further notice. For now, we're only conducting interviews virtually, and we will not extend any new offers of employment until further notice. We will, however, honor any offers of employment that have already been extended.

**24. Do we have a plan if this starts interrupting our business operations?**

The U.S. and Canadian governments have designated waste collection as essential infrastructure needed and maintained during this unprecedented time, so we should be able to continue serving customers in that way. We also have a task force actively monitoring the latest developments from regulatory agencies, as well as federal, state and local governments. This team is also working through scenario planning to maintain business continuity in the event of an interruption to our operations.

**25. What are we doing to help our customers through this challenging time?**

WM provides an essential service and we've developed several initiatives focused on ensuring our customers have uninterrupted service. Until further notice, WM is taking steps up to and including extension of payment terms, suspension of late fees and continuation of service even in the event of delayed payment. Our focus with these efforts will be on our direct-billed residential customers, as well as small and medium business commercial customer accounts.

**Compensation and Benefits**

**26. My child's school is closed, what should I do?**

If you have been notified that your child's school is closed, you should immediately notify your supervisor and People Business Partner. To help offset the potential need for extra childcare, every benefit-eligible employee will now have 20 days of WM-subsidized care through Bright Horizons (an increase from 10 days). Please visit [My WM Total Rewards](#) to learn more about this benefit.

**27. Will WM pay me if I choose to stay home to care for my children or do not feel comfortable coming into work during this time?**

If you do not have symptoms and have not been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis, then you'll be required to use PTO or apply for administrative leave. If you have questions about your options, please reach out to your People Business Partner or call the employee hotline.

**28. This whole situation is giving me anxiety... is there anyone who can help?**

We understand that the media coverage, travel bans and other information out there can create feelings of uncertainty. All benefits-eligible employees can take part in our Employee & Family Assistance Program to speak with a licensed professional. Please visit [My WM Total Rewards](#) to learn more about this benefit.