

## Onsite Wastewater Is Essential Critical Infrastructure

As the country continues to take new measures to combat COVID-19, many state and local governments are implementing “shelter-in-place” orders. These orders encourage citizens to stay home unless absolutely necessary and for all “nonessential” businesses to temporarily stop operations. Some state and local jurisdictions have also implemented fines and other sanctions for violation of these orders.



[Click here](#) to view a memo from the Department of Homeland Security which identifies “water and wastewater” as an essential service to maintain the country’s infrastructure viability. (Note highlighted areas especially)

Put simply — **if your state or county is under a shelter-in-place or “lockdown” order, you have the right to keep installing servicing, operating, repairing or pumping septic tanks and other types of onsite wastewater treatment systems, and any other duty which ensures effective and safe wastewater treatment for your customers. Manufacturers and wholesalers of onsite system equipment, parts and supplies are equally critical to maintaining this segment of infrastructure.**

Onsite and decentralized treatment systems provide wastewater infrastructure for 86 million Americans and are essential for a variety of reasons:

**Preventing health and environmental risks.** Contamination from a malfunctioning system is a health risk to homeowners, nearby neighbors, water wells, groundwater supplies and the environment. These problems may become acute during this crisis as more people use disinfecting wipes and paper towels which are flushed into their onsite system, creating sewage backups, and other problems.

**Protecting other elements of critical infrastructure in unsewered areas.** Many other companies and businesses which are deemed essential infrastructure -- from chemical manufacturers and Walmart to health clinics and medical supply houses – are served by large onsite systems. If their wastewater treatment fails, they often cannot operate.

**Ensuring that new and in-process construction projects can move forward.** All construction in unsewered areas requires some type of onsite system for business or residential occupancy. Unless an onsite system can be installed, other critical infrastructure businesses won’t be able to expand existing facilities or open new ones. In addition, homeowners, businesses, developers and builders need timely system installation to ensure unnecessary financial damages due to loss

of deposits, expiration of lines of credit, changes in loan qualification status, or other funding-related problems.

If you do experience any issues with state or local government officials keeping you from running your business, let NOWRA and your state association know as soon as possible. Please stay safe, healthy, and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

**P.S. NOWRA has set up a [web page with resources to help online wastewater professionals and businesses stay informed on key issues affecting our industry and our businesses during the Covid-19 crisis](#). You can visit it [here](#).**

Sincerely,

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