What would you recommend for staffing for a group of 6?

Staffing issues related to small communities are much more challenging. Separate workers as much as possible during daily routines to minimize contact with each other. Consider face-time or Skype app for face to face discussions.

Consider former/retired employees as possible back-ups. Provide necessary cross training now before COVID severely limits your choices.

Has anyone had trouble getting day to day PPE needed for their operations? Gloves, and respirators are critical to our industry, but at the same time we know our healthcare people need these critically too.

Yes, most communities, similar to the health care industry are having difficulty finding appropriate PPE. Ask your local municipal or County Emergency management Agency for possible additional resources.

How are municipalities justifying using public funds to having field employees stay home with pay?

Some communities are looking at COVID-19 as the national crisis it is and in national emergencies some of the traditional ways of looking at costs are no longer valid. Most communities are “doing whatever needs to be done” to guarantee the workforce. This is typically authorized by the Chief Executive officer of the utility. Perhaps by the Mayor or Village Managers proclamation of such need.

Regarding wastewater and COVID-19...this link is viable:

https://event.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1288028&tp_key=5b418a333f

Comment: I understand that raw wastewater can have COVID-19, but it is really susceptible to chlorination

Has anyone reached out to JULIE to see if an extension can be granted to allow more time for non-emergency locates?

JULIE has been contacted and they are meeting with their Board to determine any policy changes related to COVID-19 routine and emergency JULIE requests. No decisions at this time.
What are other utilities doing to deep clean offices where staff who test positive worked? In-house staff or professionals?

General consensus that most are using in-house employees to do any special cleaning. It was mentioned by a webinar attendee that they have canceled outside cleaning agencies due to the possibility of the contractor bringing the disease into their buildings.

How is your utility handling a high water bill complaint? How are you handling the billing of that account?

All routine calls are being taken care of over the phone as much as possible. No extraordinary billing charges are going out at this time until things are back to normal. No penalties, etc. Anytime an employee has to respond to a home, the utility should be asking a series of questions about the health of the individuals living in the home and employees should have proper PPE available to them if they do need to enter a home of unknown circumstances.

The fact that symptoms could take days to show themselves, are you concerned with just alternating shifts every other day. Would it be best to alternate work weeks if possible?

Good question which needs to be addressed by each utility. If it works to alternate weeks, instead of days, or several days, the utility should consider it if it is a better option in their opinion.

Is there any way we as Municipal Operators can get tested to make sure they are negative? As there are many people that are not having any symptoms but are testing positive.

At this time there are no special rules addressing operators to go to the “front of the line” as some first-responders are having that opportunity.

Do we know how many communities are involved in the Agency Response Network?

There are more than 90 utilities involved in ILWARN at this time.
Are municipalities required by the executive order to send contractors/engineers/vendors/etc a letter stating the service they provide is considered critical infrastructure and is essential? We are being asked to provide this by several vendors. Looking for clarification.

At this time there are no requirements we are aware of for notifying suppliers and vendors. There is a letter available on the ISAWWA web site which addresses the “essential services clause” for utility workers and that letter might suffice.

Will a copy of this presentation be available or do we need to take notes?

Yes – the webinar is archived and available on the ISAWWA web-site


Have you seen the water use go up or down with the stay at home changes that have been implemented?

At this time, it is still too early to tell how water usage will be affected. Each town will be a little different based on their industrial/commercial/residential usage categories and how much of their commercial and industrial is shut-down.