



National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Society Limited

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30th March 2020

NFGWS General Advice Note No. 3 For GWS Boards and Management during the COVID-19 outbreak

The Government announced further restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 last Friday the 27th of March 2020. Clearly, water services - including those provided by the GWS sector - are recognised as essential services that should continue to operate fully at this time. Water services are essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19, as are the associated services required to keep treatment plants and distribution networks operational. Therefore, these services are not restricted. If any scheme is experiencing difficulties in terms of supply chains, contractors or other, please contact your NFGWS Development Officer immediately.

Government Advice:

- If you are providing an essential service, you should identify those employees (including sub-contractors and so on) who are essential to the provision of that service and notify them. This can be done by category of employee or by individual; it could include all employees of the organisation.
- when travelling to and from work, employees should at all times bring with them **either** a work identification or a letter from your employer indicating that you are an essential employee (see appendix 1 NFGWS template letter), as well as one other form of identification.
- If you are providing an essential service, latest public health guidance should be followed at all times.
- All organisations who provide essential services should have business continuity and resilience plans in place. This should take account of the possibility that key workers or key facilities may be impacted by COVID-19. This Guidance will be kept under ongoing review, and will be updated as required.
- a full list of essential services has been published, which can be viewed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dfeb8f-list-of-essential-service-providers-under-new-public-health-guidelin/>

Contingency planning:

Schemes that have yet to put the necessary contingency arrangements in place need to do so **Immediately**. NFGWS Development Staff continue to be available to advise and assist schemes through this process. Contingency arrangements should be implemented in accordance with both NFGWS COVID-19 advice notes:

- <https://nfgws.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NFGWS-Advice-Note-on-Covid-19-and-GWSs-10-03-2020-3.pdf>
- <https://nfgws.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NFGWS-GWS-Advice-Note-2-on-Covid-19-20-03-2020-3.pdf>

Operational Monitoring:

GWSs should continue to conduct essential operational water quality monitoring on distribution networks, adhering to EPA & Local Authority advice. Maintenance of an effective chlorine residual (i.e. >0.1mg/L) throughout the distribution network is a key indicator of microbiological compliance. Therefore, this activity should continue throughout the Covid-19 crisis. GWS should avoid sampling locations in domestic properties or at locations where appropriate social/physical distancing cannot be maintained. Undertaking handheld chlorine monitoring from hydrants or other appropriate locations on the network as a substitute for domestic connections should be considered. GWSs are advised to keep Local Authorities updated regularly on water quality or water supply issues.

Appendix 1 - NFGWS template letter for GWS Essential Personnel

_____ Group Water Scheme Co-Operative Society Limited/Company Limited by
Guarantee/Company Limited by Shareholding
(delete as appropriate)

Registered Number: _____

Date: _____

**PERMISSION TO ATTEND WORKPLACE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC – ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

To whom it may concern;

The individual in possession of this letter _____ (NAME) is an essential worker for the
above Group Water Scheme and is required to travel to and from his/her workplace at
_____ (INSERT ADDRESS OF WORKPLACE).

As part of _____ (NAME) work, they are required to travel to (DELETE OR AMEND AS
APPROPRIATE):

- the GWS treatment plant located at _____.
- the GWS reservoirs site/s located at _____.
- and within the bounds of the scheme’s distribution network for essential operational works.

The Irish Government on 28th March 2020 established a list of essential services and businesses that need to continue to operate during the weeks ahead. Utilities, such as the provision of potable water, is designated as an essential role/activity. This work cannot be done from home and therefore this employee is required to attend work at the above address and within the bounds of the GWS network.

He/she should be considered exempt from local and mobility restrictions when travelling to, returning from or performing his/her work-related duties.

Any attendance at the workplace will be in full adherence with any hygiene and physical distancing guidelines in relation to COVID-19.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact:

- _____ (GWS Chairperson) _____ (Mobile No.)
- _____ (GWS Secretary) _____ (Mobile No.)

Yours sincerely,

GWS Secretary