



SAFELY RE-OPENING BUILDINGS

General Guidance for Water Utilities

prepared by the
**Canadian
Water and Wastewater
Association**

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Additional resources will be posted to www.cwwa.ca
as they become available.

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This guidance document has two parts:

Part 1: General Guidance for Water Utilities

- to recommend steps to prepare for a community re-opening
- to support their efforts in communicating information to building owners/operators

Part 2: FACT SHEET for Building Owners/Operators

- Intended for distribution directly to those responsible within each building
 - Includes a one-page Checklist for flushing, cleaning and testing
 - Provides direction to more detailed resources
- Utilities are encouraged to adapt this for their own use, adding local contacts and any specific directions they can share

Re-Opening Buildings

As Provinces and Territories lift COVID-19 restrictions and look to re-open buildings, there are critical steps that governments, water utilities, and individual property owners must take to ensure the safety of their community.

Prolonged closures:

National response to the COVID-19 crisis has forced the prolonged closure or reduced occupancy of many buildings. This includes, offices, retail outlets, restaurants, hotels, factories and more. This also includes many institutions such as schools, libraries and community centres.

The issues:

When buildings are closed or on low occupancy for any prolonged period, water in the building becomes stagnant and can pose serious health risks. Harmful microbiological and chemical contaminants can grow or leach into water supply. *See the **FACT SHEET** for more details.*

The effect of such stagnation will vary between each building based on factors such as length of the shutdown, size of the building, number of occupants, complexity of the system, integrity of the plumbing, and maintenance performed during the shutdown.

Responsibilities:

Water utilities are responsible to get clean, safe drinking water to each property in accordance with provincial/territorial regulations. While it can be argued our responsibility ends at the property line, property owners will look for direction and support from water professionals and the first place they will typically look is to their local water supplier.

Provincial/territorial authorities such as Public Health Units, Labour, Food, Health and Education ministries set and enforce regulations on the private sector and institutions to protect workers and the general public.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of **each property owner** to ensure it maintains the safety of the water within their building. Prior to re-opening or fully re-occupying a building, building managers need to take steps to flush stagnant water, clean taps and fixtures and test that the water in their building is safe.

Informing and Supporting Building Owners

FACT SHEET:

The CWWA has created the attached FACT SHEET for Building Owners/Operators

- This was written specifically for the building owner/operator to read
 - We recommend utilities distribute this fact sheet, or their own fact sheet to the building owners, operators, managers in their community
 - Utilities are encouraged to adapt this FACT SHEET as they see fit
 - Add your own logo or fully replace our CWWA logo and use this as a basis to create your own fact sheet
 - Add any specific details you can share such as recommended flushing times, disinfectant residual, temperatures, etc.
 - Add local resources such as water treatment companies, plumbers, pool specialists, testing services, etc
- * Work with your local public health authority on this **FACT SHEET**

Distribution:

Getting a FACT SHEET distributed quickly and as widely as possible:

- Use your utility or municipal contact information
 - Consider using your Chief Building Official and inspectors
 - Use the utility/municipal website and social media
 - Consider hand delivery to buildings
- Work with your local public health authority
 - Distribution to all of their contacts
 - Use of their inspectors, especially for restaurants and institutions
- Work with community business organizations
 - Chambers of Commerce, BIA's
 - Trade associations
- We ask provincial/territorial water associations to share this with the appropriate ministries:
 - Perhaps such fact sheets could be part of their provincial re-opening communications and requirements

Utility Preparation:

The following are recommended steps for utilities and municipalities to take in advance of re-opening of their community:

- Be prepared for a significant increase in water demand as many buildings begin to rigorously flush their systems
- Of course, this means an equal increase in wastewater collection
- Ensure the quality of your water distribution by considering flushing water mains and hydrants in advance; especially in commercial/industrial zones that have seen significant shutdown or reduced occupancy
- To support the rigorous building flushing and disinfecting efforts, consider increasing disinfectant levels temporarily
 - * It is recommended that disinfectant levels be increased gradually to avoid odour and taste complaints

Communications:

- Be prepared for questions and calls for support from building owners
 - What details or advice can you give them as far as how long to flush, expected water temperature, expected chlorine residual, etc.?
 - Where can they find professional services such as local water treatment companies, plumbers, pool specialists, testing equipment and services?
 - IF you cannot answer these questions be prepared to refer them
 - Will utilities consider waiving the additional water and wastewater fees associated with this rigorous flushing effort?
- Share this with your utility and municipal communications staff
 - Make this information available on your website and through information lines such as 311 centres
 - Be sure to post links to the detailed guidance and regulations they will need – *See the attached FACT SHEET for a list*
- Share with your Mayor and Council Communications staff
 - Be prepared for questions from the public concerning the safety of their tap water
 - Encourage the use of this Guidance document and the FACT SHEET as Speaking Notes for the Mayor and Council when addressing the public or the media