

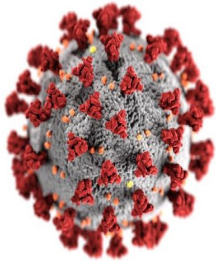
# MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



# THE FLOW N' GO

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## THE AFFECT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON OUR DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

AS WE ARE ALL ACUTELY AWARE, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. VOLUMES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE VIRUS. IN THIS ISSUE OF *THE FLOW N' GO*, WE WILL FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON OUR WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS AND HOW OUR DEPARTMENTS HAVE REACTED TO THE CORONAVIRUS.

### MARBLEHEAD'S WATER IS SAFE FROM CORONAVIRUS

Customers who receive their water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), which includes Marblehead, do not need to worry about their water containing COVID-19. The water provided by the MWRA will continue to meet all health standards.

#### EPA: 'AMERICANS CAN CONTINUE TO USE AND DRINK TAP WATER'

The Environmental Protection Agency, in a March 18, 2020 release, reported that the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies. Based on current evidence, the risk to water supplies is low.

Previously established regulations with treatment requirements for public water systems prevent waterborne pathogens such as viruses from contaminating drinking water. The Coronavirus is a type of virus that is particularly susceptible to disinfection and standard treatment and disinfectant processes are expected to be effective.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agrees, stating, "The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water. Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19."

The EPA recommends that Americans continue to use and drink tap water as usual. Boiling water is not required as a precaution against COVID-19.

Updates from the EPA can be found at [www.epa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.epa.gov/coronavirus).

#### MWRA'S TREATMENT SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO REMOVE VIRUSES

All of Marblehead's drinking water passes through the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority's (MWRA) state-of-the-art John J. Carroll Water Treatment Plant located in Marlborough, Massachusetts. There the water is treated according to strict state and federal regulations.

Chlorine, as well as other treatments, is used to disinfect the water from bacteria and viruses. Viruses such as COVID-19 are reported to be very susceptible to being treated with Chlorine.

The MWRA uses ozone treatment as the primary disinfectant, ultraviolet light as a second primary disinfectant, and sodium hypochlorite (chlorine) and aqueous ammonia for residual disinfection.

(Complete information on the MWRA's water treatment can be found at [www.MWRA.com](http://www.MWRA.com).)

The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that the, "presence of the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies and based on current evidence the risk to water supplies is low."

Drinking water from the tap is safe.

## DO YOU KNOW...

Everyone has seen it by now: the illustration of what appears to be a ball with thorns or spikes sticking out of it to represent the Coronavirus. But do you know how this came to be the representation for Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. These spikes give this family of viruses its name—corona, which is Latin for "crown."

Currently, there are seven coronaviruses that can make people ill. Three of these—MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV and COVID-19 (the current strain)—emerged in the last twenty years.

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## CORONAVIRUS CREATES UNIQUE PROBLEM FOR SEWER SYSTEMS

All of the major health organizations and environmental agencies are reporting that the water that is delivered by municipal water systems, such as Marblehead's water system, is not affected by COVID-19. But not enough is known yet to make a similar statement about the affect of the virus on waste water (sewerage) systems. Current information suggests that COVID-19 may be transmitted through the fecal-oral route, so caution is being urged. One "side-affect" of the virus has become evident: an increase in the use of sanitary wipes presents a very real danger to our sewer system.

### SO-CALLED 'FLUSHABLE WIPES' SPELL DISASTER FOR SEWER SYSTEMS AND, POSSIBLY, YOUR HOME



We have said it over and over and over again but people just don't listen. **DO NOT FLUSH SO-CALLED FLUSHABLE WIPES!**

COVID-19 has caused a huge increase in the use of these wipes. As more and

more people flush the wipes down their toilet, they are putting Marblehead's sewer system, and their home, at risk.

Now, this problem has literally 'hit the fan'.

To the left is a recent picture of a sewer pump in Newburyport that is totally clogged with wipes. There is no possible way that sewerage could pass

through. And if it can't get through, where does it go? It backs up into your home, of course.

Then there is the damage that the wipes cause to the sewer pumps. Not only is the pump expensive to replace, it may be difficult to get one during these times.

Bottom line: **Don't even think about flushing 'flushable' wipes.**

## CHALLENGING TIMES FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

The Water and Sewer Commission, like every other organization, has had to make revisions to their daily routines as a result of the Coronavirus. The water and sewer departments are considered emergency response departments, much like the police and fire departments. Access to safe running water and a way to get rid of it once used is a necessity. In making changes to the Commission's operations, maintaining services and the health of the public and our employees was paramount. (Hopefully, by the time most of you are reading this, some things will be back to normal and many of the precautions below will no longer be needed.)

### ACCESS TO OFFICE RESTRICTED

Like every other Town department, the public is not allowed inside our building. Payments and documents can be deposited in the drop box located on the garage door to the right of the office door. (If paying in cash, please call the office for further instructions.)

Customers are encouraged to make online payments through the Town's website at [www.marblehead.org](http://www.marblehead.org). The 30-day window in which to make online payments has been extended.

Out-going documents will be emailed or faxed or left in a basket located outside of an office window for pick-up.

### CREWS WILL NOT ENTER HOMES

Except in extreme emergency cases, water and sewer employees will not enter any building to perform routine work such as meter change-outs and sewer deduct inspections. All outside work and pump

station maintenance will continue.

The office will keep a list of service requests and the customer will be contacted to set up an appointment once restrictions have been lifted.

### STAFFING ADJUSTMENTS

Because water and sewer employees are emergency responders, it is critical that we take every step possible to maintain the health of our crews.

The staff has been divided into two groups with one group working for a week while the second group is on home lock-down, working from home or taking online classes for license renewals. Hopefully this will assure that we will have at least half of our employees healthy at all times.

### SEASONAL METER INSTALLATION

There has been a change in the process of re-installing seasonal water meters for

those who have been away for the winter. Those customers will now need to hire a licensed plumber to install the meter.

Detailed information is available at [www.marblehead.org/water](http://www.marblehead.org/water). Click on 'water department' then 'water meters' and the link is at the top of the page.

### REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS

There has also been a revision to the real estate transfer process. The required inspection by the water department will now be done after the closing and the sellers and buyers will be required to submit a signed form agreeing to allow the inspection at a later date.

Realtors and those customers who are selling their home themselves should read the revised process and print the required form from the links found at the top of the page by going to [www.marblehead.org/water](http://www.marblehead.org/water) and clicking on 'Real Estate Transfers'.

The information contained in this issue of *The Flow N' Go* is current as of the time of publication. Because knowledge of the Coronavirus is rapidly evolving and changing, readers are advised to stay abreast of the situation on a daily basis with up-to-date reliable news releases. Material for these articles came from numerous government agencies and published reports.