

COVID-19 Water user safety at water distribution and collection points

Water Mission has long been committed to best-in-class hygiene standards at water collection points and water distribution points in the communities where we work. Because of COVID-19, the need for safe water and hygiene is ever more critical for reducing risk of disease transmission. The purpose of this document is to outline initial recommendations for ensuring water user safety at distribution and collection points.

Recommendations

While there is currently no medicine that can prevent or cure COVID-19, Water Mission has a few recommendations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 through handwashing and limiting contact of shared surfaces (tapping valves, water containers, coins, e.g.) and shared physical spaces.

Handwashing

According to the WHO, “frequent and proper hand hygiene is one of the most important measures that can be used to prevent infection with the COVID-19 virus¹”. This is covered in Water Mission’s WASH Promotion Cycle #3: Healthy Hygiene Practices. This brochure can be displayed and/or distributed as a reminder for water users.

- There should be a station where water users can wash their hands with soap/detergent at each distribution point before collecting water. Water users should be washing their hands before touching any tapping valves or other common surfaces at a water point.
- Safe water operators and tapping attendants should also be washing their hands frequently. Key moments include:
 - After handling money
 - After touching any water containers
 - After contacting any water user
 - At key times outlined in WASH Promotion Cycle #3
- Attendants/operators can also promote handwashing by procuring and selling soap/detergent at distribution points for at-home use.
- The display of posters on handwashing is also encouraged. These can detail key moments when hands should be washed as well as proper techniques. These are especially important at distribution points that are not supervised by a tap attendant/operator. Posters in [Water Mission’s WASH Promotion Cycle #3 Poster Book](#) can serve this purpose.

Avoiding facial contact

Contraction of COVID-19 can take place when someone touches a contaminated surface and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Therefore, tap attendants/operators and water users should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth and take care to wash their hands frequently before and after touching shared surfaces or other people.

¹ World Health Organization. “Water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for COVID-19. Technical brief;” 3 March 2020 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>

Disinfection of common surfaces

There are several surfaces that see frequent contact from multiple people during the water collection process, such as water containers, fill hoses, tapping valves, and coins/bank notes. Any surface that is touched frequently by tapping attendants, operators, or water users should be frequently disinfected.

Each water container should be disinfected before every fill.

Water users should also disinfect the tapping valve before filling their container.

When possible, coins should be used for payment and dropped directly into a bucket of disinfecting solution without handing to the tapping attendant/operator.

If paper bank notes are the only option, hands should be washed after handling. Operators/attendants should encourage water users to drop their payment into a bucket/container rather than handling money during each transaction. Operators/attendants are then only handling money a few times a day when counting or making change.

The ideal disinfectant solution at tapping and distribution points is 0.05%. Higher concentrations can have adverse effects to skin under prolonged exposure. Lower concentrations may prove to be ineffective.

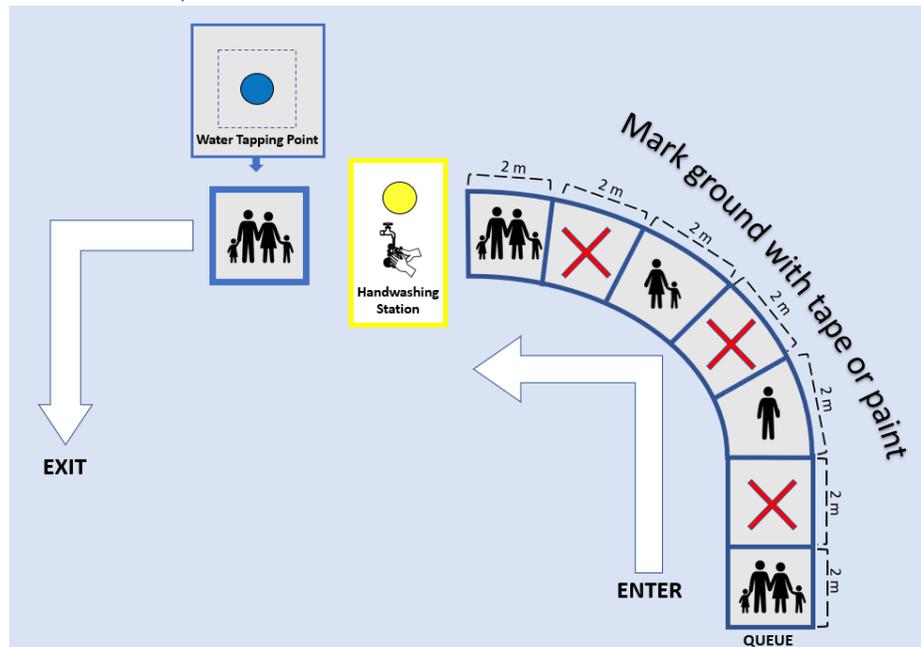
The most common disinfectant is 5% sodium hypochlorite bleach in most communities. Note the table below for recommended bleach to water solutions. [Use this guide for a step-by-step process](#) on how to safely prepare a disinfection solution. Also, [reference this guide](#) if using a different bleach concentration (3-8%) or a different disinfectant than bleach (calcium hypochlorite or ACL56, e.g.). When mixing, use gloves and minimize splash and spilling.

5% Sodium Hypochlorite Bleach	Volume of Water in Solution					
	20 L	40 L	100 L	150 L	200 L	1000 L
Desired Concentration of Chlorine Solution	Volume of 5% Bleach Required					
0.5 – 1.0 mg/L	0.4 mL	0.8 mL	2 mL	3 mL	4 mL	20 mL
500 mg/L (0.05%)	0.2 L	0.4 L	1 L	1.5 L	2 L	10 L
5000 mg/L (0.5%)	2 L	4 L	10 L	15 L	20 L	100 L
10000 mg/L (1%)	4 L	8 L	20 L	30 L	40 L	200 L
20000 mg/L (2%)	8 L	16 L	40 L	60 L	80 L	400 L

Modifications to Water Collection Process in Response to COVID-19

When queueing and waiting for water, families should maintain 2 meters (6 feet) of separation, as recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention². Since COVID-19 can spread through sneezing, coughing, and water droplets from breathing, this distance minimizes the risk of transmission from one person to another. Tape or paint may be used to mark the ground to guide families in keeping the appropriate distance.

Additionally, each tapping point should have a clear entry and exit point to minimize close contact with those who are queueing and those who have filled. See diagram.



When there are multiple access points at a kiosk/standpipe/tap stand, it is best if water users continue to maintain two meters of distance. If access points are less than 2 meters apart, it may be best for a tap attendant/operator to run containers back and forth between the queue line (or handwashing station) and the access points.

Some committees may choose to switch to a delivery model to limit crowding at water points and contact between water users. In this system, the greatest risk will be to the operators and employees touching every water user's individual containers. When collecting empty containers, the outside of water containers should be disinfected immediately upon pickup using a disinfection solution. Employees and operators should also avoid touching other surfaces (steering wheels, handlebars, tailgates, etc.) before disinfecting bottles, as well.

Conclusions

Safe water is essential to preserve the health of water users each and every day. Therefore, safe water service must continue. However, it is important to remain mindful of risks associated with viruses like COVID-19.

- Handwashing is of highest importance and should continue to be promoted using materials from Water Mission's WASH Promotion Cycle #3.
- Additionally, shared surfaces should be disinfected (money, tapping valves, collection containers, etc.).
- Individuals and families should be encouraged to keep a safe distance (2 meters or 6 feet) from each other at water points.

Water Mission has recommended a specific process to ensure the safety of water users and attendants/ operators which can be adapted to your specific context. This process can be shared via mobile devices and printed as posters around a water point. To see digital and print step-by-step posters and a comprehensive poster, visit our [COVID-19 Resources](#) page.

² The World Health Organization recommends maintaining at least 1 meter (3 feet) of distance. Water Mission is following the more rigorous CDC guideline.



Note

This is Version 2.0 developed on April 8, 2020. To make sure you are accessing the latest version, and to get other helpful resources, visit our [COVID-19 Resources](#) page.

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