



Our Region's Trusted Water Leader
San Diego County Water Authority

WEDNESDAY WATER TALK

by Sandra L. Kerl, General Manager

Good afternoon, San Diego County leaders.

A few weeks ago, I invited you to join us in our efforts to raise money for the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank in this time of extraordinary need. I'm pleased to report that water agency employees, Board members and friends like **you have raised more than \$10,000 for hunger relief just through our donation portal**. Some of our member agencies are running complementary campaigns that have pushed our collective total even higher. Please help us do more by [clicking here](#) to donate.

That fundraising effort is a testament to the goodwill of the region's water and wastewater employees, who continue to report for duty at home offices, treatment plants, pipeline repair projects and elsewhere across San Diego County to ensure these vital services continue as **we look forward to starting the recovery phase of this journey**.

One of our top priorities – particularly these days – is public safety. I'm so pleased that this week **we are helping to distribute 25,000 facemasks to water and wastewater agency personnel across six counties**. The masks were provided by the U.S. EPA, and our Operations and Maintenance Department set up a protocol for drive-thru pick-up at one of our facilities. All told, dozens of agencies will benefit – and ultimately, we all benefit from the continued safe operation of water and wastewater utilities as the foundation of our economy and quality of life.

On a related note, **we're advising building owners and managers to take precautions with their plumbing systems** as they prepare for returning to work. Many commercial and industrial buildings have been partially occupied even during the COVID-19 shutdown and won't have any challenges. However, special care should be taken with plumbing systems in buildings that have been vacant or have had low water use for extended periods to ensure water quality and safety. That's because bacteria can flourish in building pipes, fixtures and associated equipment (like fountains, cooling towers and HVAC systems) that aren't used for several days. **Serious health problems can result from the bacteria, but prudent action can avoid complications**. I encourage you to learn more about best practices for water management inside buildings from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

At the Water Authority, **we're taking additional measures to prepare for a safe return to the workplace, which seems more imminent with each passing day**. For instance, we're testing new "door handles" for our bathrooms that can be opened with a foot to reduce the potential for germ transmission. We're also preparing to employ counter shields at the front desk, trying touchless faucets, and researching potential changes to our building systems to improve ventilation and sanitation. We're also considering what kind of reopening strategies might increase safety -- for example, staggered shifts or schedules to enhance social distancing as staff return to the office.

With those safety measures and others, I can assure you that **the Water Authority and its 24 member agencies will continue to provide safe, reliable and plentiful supplies 24/7**. Thank you for all you do in and for our region. I look forward to seeing you in person and I welcome your comments, suggestions and questions at GM@sdewa.org.



Sandra L. Kerl
General Manager
San Diego County Water Authority

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San Diego County Water Authority
4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA 92078
(858) 522-6700