



Orange Water and Sewer Authority

OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill's not-for-profit public service agency delivering high quality water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services.

Procedures for the Development Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 19, 2020

In keeping with national and state guidance, OWASA has closed its business office to visitors and enacted precautions to help keep our employees and the public safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most employees are working remotely. While OWASA's primary focus throughout this pandemic is to protect the health and welfare of our employees while ensuring provision of safe drinking water and sanitation services to our customers, we intend to continue to support the development community with their projects to the extent possible. This will require some changes in procedures. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation during this uncertain time.

The ability of OWASA to respond quickly is likely to be diminished during this event. Demands for services have increased, staffing for some services is conducted in reduced shifts, and new processes and techniques can reduce operational efficiency. Nonetheless, OWASA remains committed to assist the development community in furthering their projects as a community benefit, both in terms of the developments themselves as well as an important employer in our community. OWASA is adjusting to perform necessary tasks remotely and electronically where possible and to limit in-person exposure to what is absolutely essential. OWASA is using Microsoft Teams to hold remote meetings and can join cloud-based meetings arranged in others' software products.

We will be evaluating these procedures as we go and making adjustments as necessary to facilitate our work as timely and efficiently as possible under the circumstances. This approach is subject to change as guidance from public health officials changes; if OWASA staff are impacted by the virus; or if additional federal, state or local restrictions impacting operations are enacted.

Plan Review

Engineering drawings shall be submitted electronically in a PDF file to Nick Parker at nparker@owasa.org. Comments will be returned electronically. Review of complicated plans can be challenging on computer screens, so engineers are encouraged to use colors and additional labeling to facilitate OWASA review. OWASA will be enforcing the requirement that submittal of revised drawings clearly mark all changes from the prior submittal and returning plans not marked as such. Extra attention should be placed on ensuring plans are correct and complete. The Checklist for New Development Projects located on the web at https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Checklist-for-Development_091019.pdf



has a detailed list of common errors and omissions that delay approval and should prove helpful in minimizing repeat submittals, and a summary of the overall development process. OWASA will be accepting documents signed in PDF or signed then scanned in PDF during this event. The North Carolina Division of Water Resources is allowing OWASA to submit fully electronically during this pandemic. See below for information on payment of fees.

Construction

To help ensure safety of OWASA inspectors during inspection or testing, OWASA will be scheduling site visits in advance and requiring work sites to set up a **safe zone**:

For exterior spaces, the safe zone for EVERY inspection must be established in one of two ways:

- 1) The work site is **cleared of workers**, except for **one owner representative** who will accompany the inspector to note or address any items of concern. The representative will wear a **face mask and gloves** and will also adhere to strict social distancing guidelines by **remaining a minimum distance of six feet** or more at all times. Any additional employees present to carry out testing must be approved as necessary on site by the OWASA inspector before entry.
- 2) A restricted area covering the entire area where the OWASA inspector needs to operate is marked off with caution tape, rope, or some other unbroken horizontal barrier to a **distance of 50 feet**, including an entry path away from primary pedestrian routes. One owner representative may accompany the inspector. Any additional employees present to carry out testing must be approved as necessary in the restricted area by the OWASA inspector before entry. Anyone inside the restricted area must wear a mask and gloves at all times.

It is the responsibility of the developer to convey to site workers this requirement to ensure that the Utility Superintendent or their designee has the authority to direct the temporary relocation of other workers for the OWASA inspection to occur. Inspectors have been instructed to remove themselves from situations and sites where these requirements are not met.

For interior spaces, the safe zone for EVERY inspection must be established as follows:

- **Isolate the construction area** from all occupied areas. Minimum separation is 6 mil plastic sheeting with adequate access limitations. A greater effort to separate the workspace may be necessary for certain sites.
- Preferred access to the work area is through a **separate entrance**. If access is through an area in shared use with the occupants, it must be **unused for 30 minutes** before the inspection starts. The contractor is responsible for coordinating this before the inspector arrives. Windows are not considered adequate access.

- One **contractor/** contractor representative shall **accompany the inspector** and shall **wear a mask and maintain a minimum 6' distance** throughout the inspection.
- The **construction area** (building or floor, depending on the size of the project) **and any related common areas shall be cleared of all occupants or construction staff for the inspection. If the inspector must visit an area outside of the isolated construction area**, that area must be unused and unoccupied for 30 minutes before the inspection starts. The contractor is responsible for coordinating this before the inspector arrives.
- Be prepared to honestly answer **health status screening questions** about those on site when the inspector calls to provide a timeframe for the inspection.

If a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified onsite or with staff working or visiting the site, the superintendent of that project is expected to **immediately** contact OWASA reps via email notification (Jessica Godreau- jgodreau@owasa.org & Tyrus Johnson- tjohnson@owasa.org). Information on the dates, times, and areas that person entered from two days prior to positive specimen collection or onset of symptoms to the last time they left the site; information on the dates, times and places anyone in close contact [defined by the CDC as within 6 feet of the infected individual for at least 15 minutes] with the person entered for the same time frame; and information on any subsequent sanitization that has been performed must be provided to OWASA. OWASA will remain off site until a determination can be made that the infected employee and their close contacts did not enter the area the inspector needs to enter, seven days have passed since the infected employee and close contacts have been onsite, and/or the area has been documented properly sanitized. It is the responsibility of the project representative to contact all others that were present onsite during the exposure period. This would include reps from Orange County, the towns, NCDOT, etc.

Service Availability Letters

Contact Joe Leo at jleo@owasa.org for a service availability letter from OWASA for a property.

Preconstruction Meetings

To minimize the numbers of people in one place, preconstruction meetings should be held via Microsoft Teams or other cloud-based meeting software to the extent possible. PDF signatures on the Preconstruction Checklist that are emailed back to the OWASA inspector are acceptable. The OWASA inspector will email the OWASA-approved plans at the time of the preconstruction meeting or immediately thereafter. The Utility Contractor will be responsible for printing the approved plans and maintaining on-site for the duration of construction.

Inspections

OWASA is required to conduct visual inspection of certain aspects of construction. This list can be viewed in the OWASA Preconstruction Comments form available at

<https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preconstruction-Comments-Form-2020.pdf>. OWASA inspectors have been instructed to leave any site where employees onsite are unable or unwilling to provide a clear worksite with strict social distancing, or are not equipped with proper PPE in the inspector safe zone. The visit will not be rescheduled until and unless the requirements are addressed.

Outages

OWASA continues to evaluate the risks and benefits of water outages for project tie-ins. While such outages may be required for a project to become operational, OWASA is sensitive to the needs of our customers who may be quarantining at home, or at home for telework or child care, and with an ongoing need for uninterrupted water. Requests for outages will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Outages that are not required at this time for the project to become operational may not be approved.

Testing

OWASA inspectors will be conducting testing and sampling. The same site requirements described above under “Construction” apply, and the OWASA inspectors have been instructed to remove themselves immediately from any non-compliant situation. Staffing at the OWASA laboratory is reduced and developers should expect longer response time for new line testing and reports. If outages impacting customers are allowed, priority will be placed on testing to restore service as quickly as possible. Adherence to OWASA’s Guidance Document for *Improving Purity Sampling Results for Water Lines* located at <https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Purity-Sampling-Ways-to-Improve-Results.pdf> should assist developers in getting clear purity samples more quickly and minimize project delays due to resampling.

Close-out

Close out documents shall be submitted electronically to Joe Leo at jleo@owasa.org. When all requirements for project close out have been met, OWASA will generate an invoice for payment of fees.

Payment of Fees

The OWASA administration offices are closed to the public for the protection and safety of its employees. Developers, engineers and contractors are encouraged to use alternative methods for the payment of fees associated with Engineering Invoices and System Development Fees.

- Payment by mail, needs to include a copy of the OWASA Engineering Invoice along with the check made out to OWASA. Send it to the attention of Customer Service at 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510.

- Payments can be made over the phone using a credit card by calling Customer Service at 919-968-4421, please have a copy of the OWASA Engineering Invoice on hand for reference. Maximum dollar amount restrictions do apply to credit card payments.
- Payments can be made by using the OWASA drop box located out front of our Administration Office located at 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510. Please include a copy of your Engineering Invoice along with your check made out to OWASA.

System Development Fees, Services, Setting Meters, etc.

Requests for Invoices shall be sent to Joe Leo at jleo@owasa.org. Invoices for setting of meters will not be issued until a project has tentative final acceptance from the OWASA inspector and all required closeout documents have been received.

Plan Review and Construction Observation Fees

Plan review fees must be paid prior to OWASA reviewing a sealed set of plans for approval. Construction observations fees are due before a Permit to Construct is granted. When all required documents are in hand, OWASA will generate an invoice, to be emailed to the Responsible Party on the Project Fact Sheet. The recipient shall pay the fees as outlined above.

State Permitting Fees

The North Carolina Division of Water Resources is allowing OWASA to submit packages for approval electronically during the COVID-19 event. When a package is being emailed to the State, OWASA will copy the responsible person on the Project Fact Sheet as well. The recipient will be responsible for sending the state plan review fees directly to the State with a copy of the project state application form for the State to match the electronic submittal to the check as follows:

Drinking Water Projects:

Public Water Supply
Archdale Building
13th Floor, Room 1304A
512 Salisbury Street
Raleigh, NC 27604-1170

Wastewater Projects:

Water Quality Permitting
Division of Water Resources
3800 Barrett Drive
Raleigh, NC 27609

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If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Godreau at (919) 537- 4244 or jgodreau@owasa.org. We greatly appreciate everyone's patience and flexibility during this time.