



EPA ALERT! For licensees

19 March 2020

Important update from the NSW Environment Protection Authority about licensee responsibilities and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What the EPA is doing

As we face the evolving situation with COVID-19, I am writing to outline the NSW EPA's plans to ensure we continue to fulfil our responsibilities as the state's primary environmental regulator while maintaining the health and safety of staff, communities, industry and other partners. That includes working to minimise any disruptions to our regulatory activities, to offer you guidance if needed, and asking for cooperation from industry and partners.

Please be assured that the EPA will continue to be guided by the latest advice from NSW and Commonwealth health authorities and will consider the impact of that advice in the delivery of our regulatory functions.

The EPA has a business continuity plan in place which is being reviewed regularly in light of the most up-to-date advice, to enable us to meet our regulatory responsibilities. That includes planning to allow staff to work remotely where appropriate so that we maintain our compliance, enforcement and pollution response activities as best we can to prevent environmental and community harm.

That means for example that we will continue to require compliance with licence conditions and issue clean-up notices and prevention notices where necessary. The EPA may however, consider requests for exemptions on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the provisions of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.

As we continue to closely monitor the situation we are providing on-going, up-to-date and appropriate communication with our employees, regulatory partners and government.

What we expect from you

As we face this unprecedented situation together, the NSW EPA strongly recommends the implementation of a business continuity plan, if one is not already in place. That plan should take into account the updated advice being provided by NSW and Commonwealth health officials, including any sector-specific advice. Now is also the right time to check you have everything in place to enact your pollution incident response management plan.

To assist the EPA in managing risks during this period we ask that all licensees notify us by email to info@epa.nsw.gov.au:

1. If you anticipate any significant risk to your ability to comply with your licence or licences under which you operate.
2. If you need advice on business continuity preparedness for your operations.

This is not a legal obligation but a request to assist the EPA and the NSW Government in managing

the current situation in the public interest.

A business continuity plan will help meet responsibilities for any environmental impacts from activities because licence conditions and other regulatory responsibilities remain in place and associated obligations will also remain in place.

These include the priority responsibilities of maintaining and operating pollution control equipment, and storing, transporting and disposing of waste appropriately.

Licensees in the waste industry should maintain good communications with clients and the EPA, particularly around any predicted service disruptions. Licensees must continue to notify the NSW EPA of pollution incidents and other regulatory or compliance issues or events.

How to stay updated

Follow the COVID19 health advice at NSW Health www.health.nsw.gov.au
It is important to follow SafeWork NSW advice at www.safework.nsw.gov.au

Updates on the EPA's status can be found on Twitter (@NSW_EPA) and you can get in touch with us through email info@epa.nsw.gov.au or phone Environment Line on 131 555.

On behalf of the NSW EPA I hope that you and your families keep well.

Kind regards

Richard Bean

Interim Chief Executive Officer

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