Managing a Wastewater Utility in a Pandemic
Our success is dependent entirely on our people!
The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous region.

- Transportation
- Wastewater collection & treatment
- Planning & development
- Parks
- Housing
Service Area and Facilities

**WHO WE SERVE**
7-county Twin Cities Metro Area
110 communities
3,000 square miles
2,600,000+ people

**OUR FACILITIES**
9 wastewater treatment plants
610 miles of interceptors
61 pump stations
250 million gallons per day (avg)

**OUR ORGANIZATION**
600+ employees
$7 billion in valued assets
$140 million per year capital program
$311 million annual operating budget

We serve ~50% of Minnesota’s population
Our Role

Protect public health

Protect the environment

Foster economical growth of the region
Our Pandemic Goals

Prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace

Reduce the risk of disruption to our essential services

Support employee well-being
National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command Structure

ES Incident Commander (me)

Public Information Officer
Safety Officer
Liaison Officer

Operations Section Chief (OPS AGM)
The “Doers”

Planning Section Chief (Capital/PLNG AGM)
The “Planners”

Logistics Section Chief (Procurement Dir.)
The “Getters”

Finance/Admin Section Chief (Council CFO)
The “Bank”
Creating Support Systems

In Person Communications
- Weekly Incident Command Briefings
- Monthly all-staff “Town Halls” (3 shifts!)
- Every-other Day Command Team calls
- Mon/Wed/Fri executive team IC “Huddles”

Written Communications
- Weekly all-staff newsletters
- Centralized Document Location (i.e., SharePoint)
- COVID Job-aid
  - Leave
  - Safety/exposures/distancing
  - Mask protocols
  - Symptomatic/ Asymptomatic

COVID Tracking
- Spreadsheet – then database tool (internally developed)
  - Symptomatic
  - Testing
  - Quarantined
- Return to work
- Leave eligibility
Start-up Pains

Role Clarity
- Incident Command role vs. day-to-day role
- Who owns operations procedures?
- Safety = safety

Procedures, Procedures, Procedures
- Ownership
- Review
- Broader Council Coordination
- Procedure overload (masks, cubicles, testing, asymptomatic, exposure protocols, work-from-home, mileage, testing on-site, testing at home, testing through MN, etc.)

Information Access
- Newsletters
- Teams page
- “It’s on MetNet!”
- Teams access
- SharePoint
### Lessons Learned

#### Never Waste a Good Crisis!
- Electronic signatures
- Video conference calls
- Community engagement
- Employee engagement

#### Role clarity is critical
- IC vs. “every day”
- Chiefs can access entire org.
- Process handoff (planning to ops)

#### Communication, Communication, Communication
- Nature (and employees) abhors a vacuum
- Share what you know
- Share what you don’t know
- “Nothing has changed” is a good update