

The City of San Jose, Environmental Services District San Jose, CA

I. Respondent and Presenter:

Linda Charfauros, Division Manager

II. Treatment Plant Characteristics:

- San Jose-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility serves 1.4 million residents of Santa Clara County. San Jose Municipal Water System service 116,000 San Jose residents
- Wastewater, recycled water, and potable water
- 570 in Environmental Services Department (6,500 entire organization)

III. HR in the Time of Covid-19

A. Description:

Water and Wastewater operations and maintenance staff work onsite. Initially, we staffed at our minimum staffing levels, with staff alternating days onsite. We subsequently resumed normal staffing levels for field staff to continue operations and maintenance of our facilities and systems. Engineering staff is onsite as needed and work remotely as

practical. Most of our office staff work remotely the majority of the time.

B. What percentage of staff work off-site and how is that working out?

Citywide approximately 40% of our staff are working remotely. Within my department, 52% are working remotely.

For the most part, it's going well. The main challenges are intermittent internet connectivity issues, and staff learning and adapting to Zoom and Microsoft Teams for meetings and trainings. Remote work has also encouraged staff to become more proficient with Office 365 tools such as OneDrive, OneNote, and SharePoint.

C. What barriers/challenges have you encountered in planning and implementing the change?

While Staff quickly worked to post COVID signage, install plexiglass barriers at reception areas and modify work-space in other ways to ensure social distancing was possible, it did take some time to fully implement these measures.

We ensured that onsite staff are informed and practice safe work practices such as social distancing and wearing cloth face coverings. We also implemented health screenings at all City locations and logistically, that has been challenging, particularly at the beginning of work shifts.

For remote workers, the main challenges are intermittent internet connectivity issues, providing staff the tools they

need to work from home (such as laptops) and staff learning and adapting to Zoom and Microsoft Teams for meetings.

D. Are there any benefits from the change?

Remote work has encouraged staff to become more proficient with Office 365 tools such as OneDrive and SharePoint. We have discovered that we can be very productive and stay connected working remotely. Those working remotely appreciate not having to commute to work.

E. How has working from home affected staff competencies and training needs?

We learned how to provide real-time training using Zoom and its going well. Because staff are located in several different facilities, online training has actually facilitated more staff attendance because they don't need to travel for 30 minutes to a different worksite to attend a training.

We developed training specific to using Zoom and Teams and on the challenges of working remotely to address those competency needs.

F. What are the lessons learned so far?

Our agency already had a telework policy, but few employees took advantage of that. We learned how much can be accomplished working remotely. Remote workers miss the in-person interaction with co-workers. Staff has found they can accomplish their work from home and that their

supervisors are only a Team message or phone call away. Shelter-in-place and remote work has demonstrated that employees want to and do great work even when working alone.

G. What are your plans for the future, post-Covid-19?

Remote work for the staff currently working remotely is viable but we do lose that in-person contact with co-workers. As mentioned, our agency already had a remote work policy in place. It is possible that some staff will request to continue working remotely at least part of time.