

Pataskala Utilities Department

COVID-19 Wastewater Testing Results



The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Health has established a program to test various wastewater plants in an attempt to gather more accurate numbers in regard to the COVID-19 infection rates of the citizens serviced by those collections systems. The Pataskala Utility Department has actively requested to be included in this testing program, and as of September 29, we were accepted.

Let me give you a little information on how this testing works. Individuals who have been infected with COVID-19 will have genetic material from the virus in their waste. This material is not a live virus but is pieces of the virus' RNA (the virus version of DNA). That genetic material enters the wastewater collection system and eventually makes its way to the Water Reclamation Facility. There, samples of the wastewater are taken and sent to a professional lab to be analyzed. The results will be used by the CDC, the EPA, and local health departments as an additional indicator of COVID-19 trends in the community.

On December 28, the Utilities Department received an email regarding the results from our wastewater sampling. Those results show a 489% increase in virus particle counts from December 9 through December 16 when compared to the week prior. These numbers indicate that there is increased community transmission of COVID-19 in our area.

These results are one of many factors that the Ohio Department of Health uses to determine the appropriate response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While these sample results are not cause for panic, they should serve as a reminder of the importance of taking personal measures to help limit the spread of this virus. Wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and washing your hands regularly are extremely important and effective ways to limit the spread.

It is often easy to assume that the high infection rates on the news are only happening in larger cities. The results of our wastewater sampling make it clear that the increase in COVID-19 infection is also occurring right here in Pataskala. We pledge to continue to work with the Licking County Health Department and the Ohio Department of Health to monitor the potential spread of the Covid-19 virus in our community.

We are happy to answer any questions at: Utilities Department, 430 South Main St, 740-964-6275

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"Clean Water In, Clean Water Out"