SUSTAINING SANITATION SERVICES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19
SUSTAINING SANITATION SERVICES
IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

FOREWORD

STILL DANGEROUSLY THREATENING

THE SERVICE MUST GO ON
... despite the many challenges

IDENTIFY THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

SECURING WORKPLACE
elimination, substitution, preparing working areas, implement safe work procedures

MAKE CUSTOMERS COMFORTABLE

MAINTAIN DEMAND
give them a break, make ordering easy, promote and promote

STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT
revisit the plan, save the cash flow, digitize information, institutionalize procedures, preparing backup

READY TO LEND A HAND

CLOSING
As stated in the Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020-2024, the Government of Indonesia (GoI) is committed to providing access to safely managed sanitation for all Indonesians to ensure the quality of public health, environment, social and economic productivity. This commitment is in line with the mandate of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which is to ensure the availability and sustainability of clean water and sanitation services for all. Therefore, the GoI insists for every household to use a healthy toilet, and a safe septic tank and to have access to sanitation services to safely manage their fecal wastewater.

The continuity of sanitation services, as with other public services, faces several challenges due to the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Many sanitation service units have to reduce the intensity of their operations, some have even been forced to temporarily stop their services. This is reflected in the results of a Rapid Assessment conducted by the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing, together with FORKALIM and UNICEF, to a number of service units in the regions.

A number of concrete steps need to be taken to maintain the sustainability of sanitation services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting from implementing risk control measures, maintaining demand for services, to increasing management effectiveness. Some of these precautions are worth sustaining in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. This booklet outlines a series of these steps.

The main message of this booklet is that sanitation service units can make the COVID-19 pandemic a momentum to improve the quality and safety of their services. Hopefully, this booklet can inspire local governments and managers of sanitation service units to improve their services and continue to provide safe services for the community, both during the pandemic and after the pandemic.

Jakarta, 20 April 2020

Tri Dewi Virgiyanti  
Director of Settlements and Housing  
The Ministry of National Development Planning / the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS)

Prasetyo  
Director of Sanitation  
The Ministry of Public Works and Human Settlements
COVID-19

STILL DANGEROUSLY THREATENING

The COVID-19 pandemic shows no signs of ending soon. All sanitation service unit staff must be aware of the following guidance before they can be invited to team up preparing measures to control the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Thousands of lives and still counting

COVID-19 victims were first detected in Indonesia in March 2020. A month later, victims were found in all provinces. Around a year later, April 2021, around 1.6 million people have tested positive for COVID-19 and more than 42,000 Indonesians have died due to COVID-19. The actual number of casualties is thought to be much higher since only limited COVID-19 testing has been carried in Indonesia to date.

In addition to its impact on human health, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive economic impact. Like other countries, Indonesia is also experiencing an economic recession. Many people have lost their jobs. Family income has decreased and thus their purchasing power. Public services are disrupted, either due to reduced operational budgets or reduced public demand.
The coronavirus is transmitted through the upper respiratory tract, namely the mouth and nostrils. The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing, or breathe. These aerosols or droplets can also land on surfaces. There is a risk of spreading the coronavirus through the air in stuffy and unventilated spaces, for example in the cabin of a desludging truck. People may also become infected by touching surfaces that have been contaminated by the virus when touching their eyes, nose or mouth without cleaning their hands. People who contract the virus may not always show symptoms of a cough and fever.

Our knowledge of COVID-19 is still growing. Some things that were declared safe are now being questioned again and vice versa. The 1.5-meter distance between humans is no longer considered safe, the endurance of the virus in the object turns out to be longer than expected, people who have recovered from COVID-19 can actually be reinfected. Infected individuals do not always show symptoms of cough and fever. Distributing vaccines is expected to reduce severe disease, but it will take longer to see how effectively vaccines can reduce transmission. The COVID-19 virus is still mutating, and so is its nature. Thus, it is important to remain vigilant and keep up to date with information from official sources.
THE SERVICE MUST GO ON

Everyone needs drinking water, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where washing hands with soap is an important measure to prevent transmission of the coronavirus. Obviously without water, people cannot wash their hands. They also need a functioning toilet whose wastewater is handled safely so that it will not pollute drinking water sources. Without safe sanitation, various diseases can reduce the body's resistance to COVID-19. Therefore, regardless of the circumstances, drinking water and sanitation services must always be available, whether for households, health care facilities, workplaces, schools, or other public places.
... despite the many challenges

There are many challenges to maintaining the availability and performance of sanitation services during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing with UNICEF Indonesia in August 2020 showed that many service units were forced to reduce the intensity of their operations, some even had to stop their operations.

**REDUCED BUDGET**

Accordingly, the availability of fuel, electricity, chemicals as well as workers will be reduced such that it will disrupt the operation of desludging trucks, sewerage system and treatment plants. Budget will no longer be available for new desludging trucks and refurbishment of treatment plants, or for supporting community-based systems.

**AREA RESTRICTIONS**

Although large-scale area restriction policies are no longer imposed, many cities still occasionally restrict the movement of people and vehicles. Thus, the route of the desludging truck can be altered or cancelled due to road closures to the customer’s house or to the septage treatment plant.

**REDUCED DEMAND**

Naturally, the weakening of the household economy will reduce the demand for sanitation services. Another possible cause of reduced demand is the concern around allowing other people to enter and/or work in their home. As a result, the revenue from the services will be significantly reduced.

**CHANGING WORKING PATTERNS**

Events and gatherings are limited, and many staff and workers must work from home. Working hours are reduced or shifted. Meetings and coordination are carried out on-line. Some people will struggle to adapt to these changes, which may reduce motivation and concentration.
Every sanitation service unit must immediately apply risk control measures to secure its operation. Safety is important not only for officers, but also for customers and the surrounding community.

The risk of transmission is everywhere, whether in the office, in the truck cabin, at the customer’s premises or at the treatment plant. Immediately identify every possible transmission agent. Involve all staff and workers in the effort. Think of this as an activity to raise their awareness about COVID-19.

Four areas of high-risk: frequently touched surfaces, direct face-to-face communication, poorly ventilated rooms, and gathering where workers congregate.
Door handles, water taps, appliances, hoses, bank notes and coins, light switches, electric control panels, water dispensers, AC and TV remote controls, and cell phones are examples of surfaces that are frequently touched and have the potential to contaminate with coronavirus.

The risk of transmitting the virus is very high when talking in close physical proximity to other people. Such as in conversations with colleagues, customers, guests, suppliers, mechanics, shopkeepers, or anyone else. The risk will be even higher if people do not use a mask.

Poorly ventilated spaces, such as workspaces, meeting rooms, plant control rooms, dining rooms, changing rooms, smoking rooms, elevators, warehouses, and desludging truck cabins, are places where aerosols with the virus can stay suspended in the air. The risk of transmission is very high in such poorly ventilated spaces.

The risk of spreading the virus is high in gatherings such as when we eat and drink together, receive visitors, visit public facilities, carry out service promotions, travel by public transportation, shop for office supplies, and worship in congregations.
Securing WORKPLACE

The risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace can be controlled through several measures. Starting with elimination and substitution, risks should then be managed through engineering measures.

**elimination**

The best measure is to eliminate or prevent the use of objects, spaces and activities that aid transmission of the coronavirus. Examples of elimination measures:

- Prohibit staff and workers with symptoms of COVID-19 from coming to work.
- Close the location where staff and workers gather.
- Avoid visits by outside parties to workplace.
- Reduce face-to-face meetings in workplace.

Risk control by means of elimination has the highest level of effectiveness, reliability and protection compared to other methods.
Work from home

The risk of COVID-19 in a workplace can be eliminated by asking employees to work from their homes (WFH). Those not directly related to service operations may be considered for WFH. This includes jobs in customer relations, service promotion, staffing, financial administration, procurement of tools and materials, operations planning and supervision, and information management systems.

substitution

Sanitation utilities can take advantage of internet-based long-distance communication facilities to replace (substitute for) face-to-face discussions and meetings. In addition to internal communication, internet-based communication should be available to customers and suppliers. Training, seminars and even comparative studies can also be conducted virtually so that more people can participate. Contactless employee sign-in system should be provided. Likewise, non-cash payment options are needed, either through bank transfers or through electronic data capture (EDC) device as implemented by UPTD PAL Bekasi City.
preparing working areas

Workplace facilities need to be modified or reorganized to secure the workplace from the possible risk of COVID-19 transmission. In some cases, additional workplace facilities may be needed.

Rearrange tables and chairs to maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 meters between people. Put signs on sofas and benches to maintain space between people.

Set up a checkpoint at the office entrance equipped with a visitor logbook, thermometer, rags, cleaning fluid, dry wipes, and hand sanitizer bottles.

Make sure windows and air vents can be easily opened to optimize indoor air circulation and to allow sunlight and heat enter the room when needed.

Provide high quality face masks and gloves as recommended by the government, such as N95 masks, medical masks, 3-layer cloth masks, and latex gloves.

Recommended tools and fluids for cleaning and disinfecting objects, floors and toilets should always be available in sufficient quantities.

Put up COVID-19 information posters on walls and in places with high traffic. Also prepare a flyer on health protocols to be distributed to employees and guests.

Provide hand washing facilities at points of entry and exit. Hand soap should always be available, along with clean water. Put up an educational poster where people wash their hands illustrating the correct hand washing technique.
implement safe work procedures

Work procedures need to be adjusted for the safety and smooth operation of services, both in the office and in the field. Health protocols established by the government must be implemented, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Document all work procedures and distribute to all workers according.

… before work

- The workers understand the health and safety protocol
- Rooms and equipment are clean and hygienic
- Personal protective equipment is available and functioning
- Only healthy workers are allowed to work
- The workers always wear a mask even if no one is around
- The workers wash their hands with soap at least 20 seconds

… during work

- Maintain a minimum physical distance of 1.5 meters
- The workers frequently wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds
- The workers use gloves when working in the field
- The workers use their own tools and do not loan it to others
- Avoid spaces with poor air circulation
- Wear a mask at all times even if no one is around

Those who travel to locations with an outbreak of Covid-19 must check their temperature at least twice, namely before and after the visit.
Customers generally have similar concerns about the transmission of COVID-19. Homeowners may be hesitant to call for sanitation services for fear of contracting coronavirus transmission from service workers. Their concern is justified. Service workers can indeed be agents of COVID-19 transmission, especially desludging workers who work from one place to another.

The best way to reassure customers is to provide them with information about the COVID-19 health protocol and demonstrate its implementation through their work. Workers should always be reminded to apply health protocols. One satisfied customer will recommend the same sanitation service to his/her neighbors and relatives.

Apart from always using masks and gloves, personnel are advised to do the following to reassure customers.

- Show the service unit identity card with their name and photograph.
- Describe the safety procedures and health protocols to be applied.
- Show the cleanliness of the tools and materials to be used.
- Do not touch objects unless absolutely necessary.
- Clean up any mess caused by service operations.
- Use a non-cash payment method.

The following photo shows the non-cash transactions made by UPTD PAL Bekasi City,
Use non-cash transaction to avoid the need to pass objects from one hand to the other.
The public needs to know that sanitation services are still running and ready to serve them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the sanitation service unit must continue to promote its services to the community. Several sanitation service units in Indonesia are doing that. In addition, they offer reduced payments and an easier process for potential customers to make orders. Demand is likely to increase if sanitation service unit personnel provide good and safe services. The service units should provide special attention to their regular customers.
Extra incentives are needed to increase public interest in sanitation services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to reduced household purchasing power, the sanitation service unit could offer:

• Tariff discounts,
• Extension of payment time,
• Payment for the service in installments,

The service will also be more attractive if the service unit provides extra services at no additional cost. For example, toilet cleaning, drain cleaning and installing the recommended standard cap on septic tank.

Nowadays people are increasingly accustomed to using smartphone applications or internet sites to order goods and services. This habit needs to be taken advantage of by the sanitation service units, especially for registration and ordering services. With the internet communication facility that the sanitation service unit already has, developing online service orders will not cost much more. Examples of such smartphone applications are readily available and Bekasi City, Gresik Regency and Balikpapan City are early adopters.
Promote sanitation service more often and in more attractive ways. However, it is important to remember that the attention of the public during this COVID-19 pandemic period is drawn more to the safety of themselves and their families.

Promotion can be done digitally, either through websites or social media applications. Take advantage of the existing customer database to send promotional messages via instant messenger applications, such as WhatsApp and Telegram.

Examples of promotional messages include:

- The benefits of sanitation services for a healthier life.
- Service providers are following strict health protocols.
- Tariffs and payment waivers are available.

Distribute leaflets or posters in strategic places.
The habit of working safely during the COVID-19 pandemic must be maintained post-pandemic.
Inevitably, sanitation service has had to improve their operation management system during the COVID-19 pandemic to sustain services. In each business chain, the weak points must be identified, and improvement measures implemented.

**STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT**

**revisit the plan**

The WFH policy, health protocols, budget cuts, and reduced household purchasing power must be addressed by adjusting the short-term work plan of the sanitation service unit. Sales target may need to be reviewed while plan to recruit employees, purchase tools and materials and improve treatment plant may need to be postponed. The new work plan should contain a budgeting and marketing strategy to help sanitation service units mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

**Save the cash flow**

Limited operating budget and reduced service revenue will affect the cash flow. To overcome this, customers should be encouraged to make advance payments. Transactions must be made easier, for example through virtual accounts, credit or debit cards and e-wallets. The sanitation service unit may also need to reschedule the repayment of debts and obligations to suppliers, sub-contractors and other partners. Again, consider postponing any unnecessary and preventable spending.
**digitize information**

Information from households, particularly regular customers, is a major asset for any service provider. The use of internet-based information and communication technology makes it easier to build an electronic database. Digitizing data on suppliers, sub-contractors and private partners can help facilitate future communication. It would also be important to digitize employee data for the purposes of assignment scheduling, attendance and performance monitoring.

**institutionalize procedures**

Work procedures, whether related to customer management, technical, monitoring, administrative, or financial affairs, must be adjusted in view of the COVID-19 health protocol. All procedures must be provided in writing and accessible to those concerned. Inform all staff and workers of the work procedures together with suppliers, sub-contractors and other business partners. Institutionalising the procedure will require a strategy for conformance/compliance as well as monitoring.

**preparing backup**

The sanitation service unit must have a solid plan to prevent and mitigate critical conditions in its operations. Equipment and materials essential for emergencies must be held in reserve, including chemicals, fuel, and PPE. The sanitation service unit also needs to know which private parties are able to provide services in times of emergency, including those who can offer a desludging backup service.
Every sanitation service unit must be ready to offer assistance to its surrounding community, as well as to provide emergency services to hospitals and various COVID-19 health facilities. They must also participate in activities to increase public awareness of the risk of COVID-19 transmission and their prevention measures. This information can be communicated through its social media channels or instant messenger application. The sanitation service unit should consider the possibility of setting up hand washing stations in neighboring communities and public places.
Despite many unfortunate stories arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, capacities have also been strengthened and new habits have been formed. During the pandemic, sanitation service units were forced to innovate in order to work more safely, effectively, and efficiently. The cleanliness and hygiene of staff and workers, workplaces and equipment all improved. Occupational health and safety protocols are taken more seriously. All staff and workers have become accustomed to wearing PPE properly. Service operations are carried out according to standard procedures. Communication with customers and suppliers now takes place without physical meeting, thus saving time and money.

All these new abilities and habits are important assets for the sanitation service unit to improve the management of its operations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sanitation service unit should have much better and safer management systems and operating procedures. Thus, not only will the sustainability of its services be maintained, but its technical and financial performance should also increase. The image of the sanitation service unit itself will improve. With increased levels of public trust, the demand for sanitation services will soar. In the end, all these efforts will increase access to safely managed sanitation, both at the city-level and nationally.
REFERENCES

Apa Yang Harus Dilakukan Masyarakat Untuk Cegah Penularan COVID-19?; Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia; Jakarta, Indonesia; Mei 2020

COVID-19 Office Risk Assessments; incegd.com; London, United Kingdom; May 2020

Introduction to Coronaviruses; Stantec; USA; 2020.

Kepemimpinan Di Masa Krisis: Menghadapi Wabah Virus Corona Dan Tantangan Di Masa Depan; McKinsey & Company; Maret 2020.


MassDEP COVID-19 FAQs for Wastewater Service Providers; Department of Environmental Protection; Boston, State of Massachusetts, USA; August 2020.

Materi Kelas Virtual Keselamatan dan Kesehatan Kerja Dalam Pengelolaan Air Limbah Setempat Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19; USAID IUWASH PLUS; Jakarta, Indonesia; Mei 2020.

The Key Role of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion in the Response to Covid-19 In Brazil; SIWI, The World Bank, UNICEF; Brazil; August 2020.

