

Safety measures to prevent spreading of COVID-19 during desludging operations

GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES

This document gives a brief about the basic Do's and Don'ts for safety measures during desludging operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

General safety

- ▶ If you are feeling unwell (fever, cough and difficulty breathing)², do not report for desludging service. Visit nearest medical facility for health check at the earliest.
- ▶ Apply for registration with Urban Local Body (ULB) and also for movement pass to carry out desludging services.
- ▶ Always carry pass for movement during lockdown period.
- ▶ Ensure minimum 1.5 m distance with other human resources at all times.
 - ▶ During lockdown period avoid carrying out operations with more than two people (driver and helper).
 - ▶ When sitting inside cesspool emptier vehicle, ensure you sit at two corners of the seats.
 - ▶ When entering a residence/institution, ensure that minimum distance is maintained.
- ▶ Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ▶ Be careful and observant at all times.
- ▶ Ensure valves and pumps are suitably sealed/shut or supervised when no O&M activity is being performed.
- ▶ Do not leave open valves and pumps unattended.
- ▶ Ensure appropriate coupling of pipes when connecting for desludging. There should be no spillage.

Personal safety precautions

- ▶ Wash your hands using disinfectant soap for a minimum of 20 seconds or disinfect them after completion of tasks.
- ▶ Use appropriate clothing/ personal protective equipment (PPE) [long sleeved shirt, long trousers, shoes, gloves (nitrile gloves), apron and mask

¹ Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. *Help us to help you: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*

² World Health Organization. *Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19): What are the symptoms of COVID-19.* [Online]. 2020. [Accessed 30 March 2020]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses#:~:text=symptoms>

(triple layer medical mask/N-95 respirator mask)]³ during desludging operations.⁴

- ▶ Keep a first aid kit, lime or chlorine solution, hand wash and hand sanitizer, spare gloves and masks in the cesspool emptier vehicle.
- ▶ Avoid coming in contact with the faecal sludge. Wash vigorously using disinfectant soap for a minimum of 20 seconds and sanitize immediately if exposed to faecal sludge.
- ▶ Protect wounds from getting in contact with faecal sludge.
- ▶ Wash clothes, gloves and boots daily. The desludging personnel should change into off-duty clothes on completion of daily tasks and wash and disinfect the clothes used before the next use.
 - ▶ Soiled PPE should be put in a sealed bag for later safe washing and laundering.⁴
- ▶ Do not be barefoot or bare handed while handling sludge and performing the O&M activities
- ▶ Do not to eat or drink during work.
- ▶ Find a clean space away from the vehicle to eat and drink. Wash hands with disinfectant soap for at least 20 seconds prior to eating or consuming liquids.

Proper disposal of waste

- ▶ Dispose the faecal sludge only at designated disposal sites only.
- ▶ Do not wait longer than one day to dispose off the faecal sludge.
- ▶ Do not dispose garbage at unofficial dumping locations.
- ▶ In case there is a spillage, the spill has to be cleaned by the operator either by sucking up the spill with the vacuum pump into the tank or if that is not possible to cover it with lime. In case that is not possible, then the spill should be washed and the wash water should be directed to a covered drain and chlorine should be sprayed on the spill area.

³ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. *Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Guidelines on rational use of Personal Protective Equipment*.

⁴ World Health Organization, unicef. *Water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management for the COVID-19 virus: Interim guidance - 19 March 2020*. [Online]. 2020. [Accessed 30 March 2020]. Available from:

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>