

BUTUAN CITY WATER DISTRICT



Butuan City Water District: Adapting during the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic through Focusing on the Fundamentals and Looking to the Long-Term

(The Philippine Local Water Districts Best Practices during the Time of COVID-19)


I. INTRODUCTION

The world is in danger as it faces with the dangerous Corona Virus Disease-19 (COVID-19), affecting millions of people and claimed thousands of lives around the world. As most of the countries impose lockdowns to contain the spread of the virus, all that we used to do are halted. Economies are shattered as the movement of products and services are strictly controlled. Businesses are closing down, resulting to massive unemployment and loss of income. Many are hungry and hopeless.

In the Philippines, the effects of the pandemic was first felt in March when Metro Manila was declared as under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), which was followed by putting the entire Luzon under ECQ.

As the corona virus continues to spread, the impact it's having in communities and the Philippine economy is vast, varied and quickly evolving. As new cases emerge in the Philippines and around the world, businesses are feeling a strain on productivity, supply chains, profitability and of course their people. In the Philippine setting, majority of the communities are under the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) while others are under the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) wherein movement of the people are limited only to buying of essentials while those high risk individuals are not allowed to leave their homes.





Most business establishments and offices are closed and only those offering essential services are allowed to open. This is to ensure that the spread of the virus will be limited considering that the health care system of the country is not that sophisticated and vast.

Locking down the country's capital surely creates a domino effect as the provincial and regional economies are intertwined with Metro Manila. As such, all provinces and regions are having a hard time coping with the situation.

In Butuan City, only groceries, market, pharmacy, banks and basic services providers are open including water district, electric company and hospitals and some government agencies. There is no mass public transport available except for taxis and tricycles only limited to two passengers. This hampers most of the mobility of the constituents of Butuan thus also affecting the capability of the masses to purchase goods and pay for services.

Greatly affected are the more than 530 Local Water Districts (LWDs). They hurdle the challenges brought about by the pandemic. This is the first time that we are fighting enemies that we cannot see. It creates confusion and uncertainty – confusion on how to deal with the problem and uncertainty of the future.

Water is very essential especially that we are battling with COVID-19 pandemic, in which our only defense against the invisible enemies is hand washing to wipe them out. In fact, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) labels water as Category 1 which means that those involved in providing water supply, including LWDs are frontliners, thus, operate in full capacity during ECQ and GCQ.

Thus, Butuan City Water District (BCWD) is continuing its commitment to bring water to its entire service area. It ensures continuous water service amidst COVID-19 Pandemic.


BCWD

BCWD was created last April 1, 1974 by the Municipal Board of Butuan under the leadership of then Mayor Figurado O. Plaza. Its birth was covered by Resolution No. 256 and in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 198, as amended, otherwise known as the "Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973."

Forty Six (46) years after its birth, its service area stretches to 60 urban and rural barangays. These barangays are now sufficiently supplied with potable drinking water, boasting BCWD with 52,579 active service connections, as of April 30, 2020.

The major source of the water supply of Butuan City is through surface water by acquiring supply through its bulk water supplier, the Taguibo Aquatech Solutions Corporation (TASC) while having five (5) pumping stations as back-up sources.

BCWD gives importance to the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan especially to internal and external stakeholders, first and foremost, ensuring the health and safety of the personnel, concessionaires and other stakeholders. Thoughtful communication is also utilized to ensure continuity of operations in the days and weeks ahead and minimize the near and long term financial and reputational impact of the virus on the District.





II. BCWD BEST PRACTICES DURING COVID-19

BCWD's mantra during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic is adapting through focusing on the fundamentals and looking to the long-term.

Focusing on the Fundamentals...

With having limitations in the operations of BCWD because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important not to be dormant. BCWD works to adapt its operations to be able to deliver services and accept customers while putting into consideration steps to ensure the safety of everybody including intensifying its information dissemination to concessionaires for updates.

BCWD conducts the following measures:

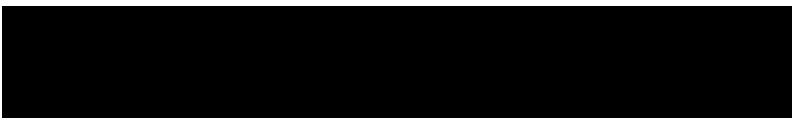
- Announcement through the official facebook page, website, press release and textblast, all about COVID-19, how it is transmitted and how a person can avoid being infected;
- Information dissemination about the Legionnaires Disease through sending out letters to large establishments in the city advising said establishments to conduct thorough flushing of its pipelines and disinfection of its plumbing system and reservoirs. Bill stuffers/flyers about Legionnaires Disease are also printed and distributed. Information was also released through the official facebook page and website and through textblast;
- Open to receive payments from 8:00AM – 4:30PM without noon break from Mondays to Fridays;
- Collection centers are also open to receive payments including those with arrears;
- Conduct of thermal scanning starting March 18, 2020;
- Extending the payment period and waiving penalties for received billings and discontinue of disconnection as of March 18, 2020;
- Seminar for new water connection is done online or one-on-one;
- Implementation of online billing inquiry, no more delivery of water bill house-to-house except for large corporations or establishments;





- BCWD also implements precautionary measures within its premises:
 1. Limited Entry – entry to BCWD premises is limited only to those wearing facemasks;
 2. Temperature Check – before entering the premises, BCWD employees, concessionaires and other clients undergo thermal scanning. Recorded temperature exceeding 37.5 degree Celsius is not allowed to enter the BCWD premises;
 3. Social Distancing – safe distancing of one (1) meter is implemented between frontliners and concessionaires and between concessionaires and concessionaires;
 4. Hand Hygiene – Alcohol are provided at entry points of the premises and frontline counters for public use; and
 5. Footbath – anybody who enters the BCWD premises must step on the footbath at the entry points of the premises.

All activities enumerated above were announced to the public through the official facebook page, website, press release and textblast to inform the concessionaires.



For employees' benefit, the following are conducted:

- COVID-19 Orientation – Took place last February 28, 2020 at the BCWD Training Hall participated in by all employees of BCWD with the speaker, Dr. Glee D. Valenzona, Infectious Disease Cluster Head of the Department of Health – Center for Health Development Caraga;

The following were the highlights of her discussion:

-The first part of the orientation focused on the background of COVID-19, how, where and when was it discovered;

- The World Health Organization declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) last January 30, 2020;

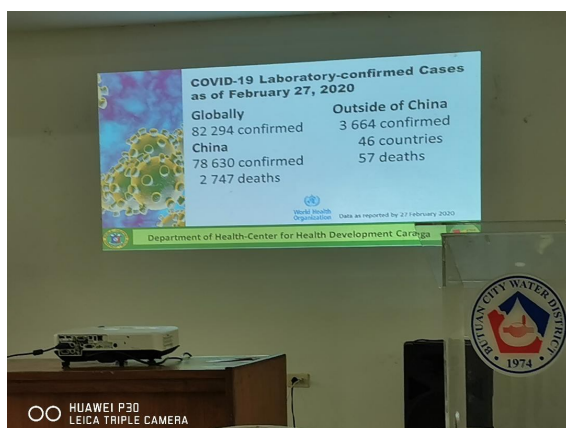
- In the Philippines, parameters are identified for those persons required to undergo home quarantine, to wit:

1. Any person, regardless of nationality, race and age, who does not exhibit any sign nor symptom but has history of travel to other areas of China and/or history of exposure to confirmed cases of COVID-19 shall be required to undergo monitored home quarantine; and
2. Those persons who exhibit fever or any symptom of lower respiratory illness, and have a history of travel to other countries with a confirmed case of COVID-19 but without any history of exposure;

- Those undergoing home quarantine shall be prohibited to leave their rooms/homes where they are quarantined until they have been certified by the local health official to have finished the 14-day requirement for quarantine procedures;

- The speaker then discussed the difference between the Persons Under Monitoring (PUM) and Persons Under Investigation (PUI);

- The speaker also discussed the possible means of transmission for the COVID-19 virus such as direct contact through sneezing and touching surfaces that a positive COVID-19 patient touched and touching your hands to your eyes or nose;



- The signs and symptoms of possible COVID-19 positive person include:

1. Fever;
2. Dry Cough;
3. Body Malaise; and
4. Sore Throat;
5. rare sign includes diarrhea.

- The speaker then shared some tips on how to minimize chances of contracting the virus:

1. Using of face masks;
 2. Hand Hygiene Practice for all. Perform hand hygiene by:
 - a. washing hands with soap and water;
 - b. use disposable paper towels to dry hands after washing of hands;
 - c. if disposable towels are not available, use dedicated cloth towels and replace it when wet;
 - d. hand hygiene should also be performed before and after preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet and when every hands look dirty;
 - e. when no soap and water is available, you can use 70% alcohol or hand sanitizer to clean hands.
- Partial operation with skeletal personnel complement – employees were only required to be on duty 3x a week according to schedule ensuring that daily business transactions and operations will not be hampered. This is implemented so that social distancing can be fully executed taking into consideration the health of the employees;
 - Provision of service vehicle for all employees due to the absence of public transport – with the declaration of community quarantine, there are no available public transport in Butuan except for a few taxis and tricycle. To ensure that the employees will have no difficulty in reporting to work, BCWD provided service vehicles to employees needing assistance in transport. A schedule is set for picking up and also for bringing the employees home by area.



Looking to the Long-Term...

BCWD is also improving and updating its operations designing it for the long-haul with dedication and perseverance. BCWD believes that now is a good time to build and hone its operations and services rendered.

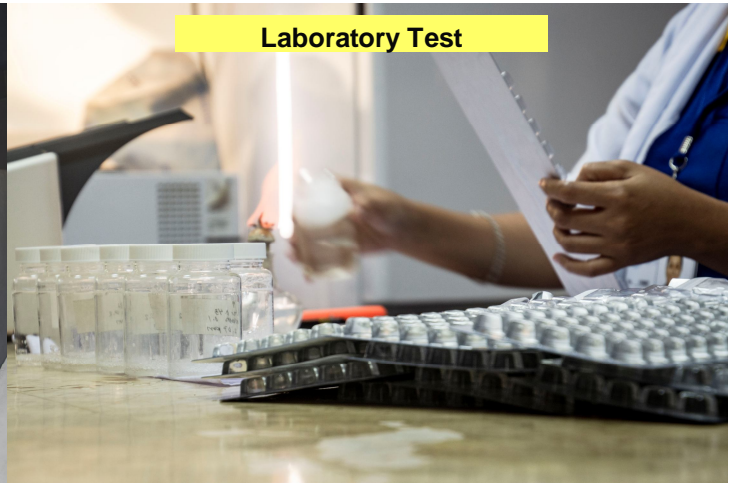
With this in mind, the following activities are conducted:

- BCWD encourages its concessionaires that while water is important in this COVID-19 pandemic, that it is also prudent that water conservation should be practiced. Top 10 water saving tips was released for the concessionaires to be reminded to save water and this was announced to the public through the official facebook page, website, press release, textblast and interview on ABS-CBN Northern Mindanao to inform the concessionaires;
- BCWD ensures continuous water supply during this time of COVID-19 Pandemic. Aside from making sure that all its facilities are operating efficiently, it conducts water pressure monitoring on the distribution pipes to investigate the pressure on densely populated areas and end points of the system;
- BCWD continues with improvement/expansion projects as it lays pipes in Brgy. Buhangin and Brgy. Mahay in an effort to improve the water supply in areas experiencing low water pressure most of the time. The project entails 600 linear meters long of 4" diameter pipes to replace existing 2" diameter pipes. Another improvement project is the upgrading of line in Brgy. Maug to 4" diameter pipes with a length of 2,100 linear meters;





Water Sampling along the lines



Laboratory Test

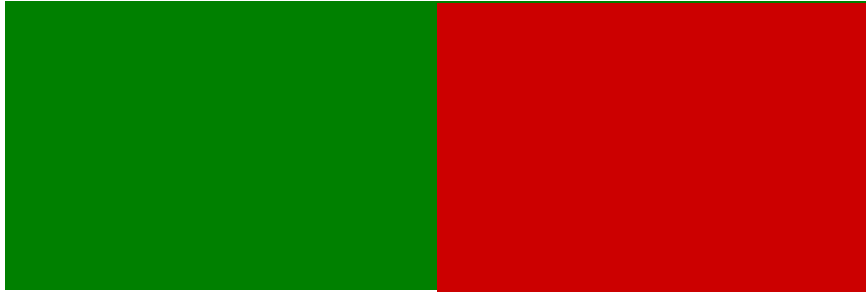
- In ensuring that BCWD water passed the quality standards set by the Philippine National Standards for Drinking Water (PNSDW), BCWD is continuously conducting water sampling activity. The roving laboratory personnel collect water samples daily from different sampling points to monitor chlorine residual and turbidity all over the service area. Also water samples are collected for bacteriological, physical and chemical analyses to ensure that the water being distributed is potable;
- Installation of new service connection is also continuing;
- BCWD is currently on the process of applying for GCash as a form of online payment for its concessionaires while preparations for partnership with PayMaya and Coins.ph is also on the works; and
- BCWD is also coming up with a NEW NORMAL OPERATIONS Plan taking into consideration the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



New service connection @ Shangri-La.



Planning for New Normal operations.



Despite the restrictions and limitations experienced by the operations of BCWD, it has continued to serve its public finding ways to improve and adapt its operations to the current situation of the country affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

BCWD: adapting during the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic through focusing on the fundamentals and looking to the long-term.

